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ONE O'CLOCK.

BY ALICE CARY.

One, by the stroke of the clock!
The time drags heavy and slow;
And I wake from dreams as full of thee
As the clouds are full of snow—
From dreams as white with thee, my dove,
As the clouds are white with snow.

I call thee all sweet names,
Song-lark, lily and rose,
And I only hear the night-fowl's cry,
And the wind as it beats and blows;
And the moan of the river under th' hill,
Freezing as it flows.

One, by the stroke of the clock!
The night will never go by—
My love, thou hast grown as cold
As th' gray cloud up in th' sky!
Yet come, and snow thyself in my arms,
And chill me, till I die.

◆

THE MUTE SINGER.*

BY ANNA CORA RITCHIE.

CHAPTER I.

SYLVIE.

> "'God bless all our *gains!*' say we,
> But, 'May God bless all our *losses*,'
> Better suits with our degree!"
> E. B. BROWNING.

The height of a house in Paris is by no means indicative of the grandeur of the abode. In a remote portion of the Rue St. Denis stands many a dwelling that, if placed beside the most sumptuous mansions of New York's Fifth Avenue, would tower above them, and yet is the residence of a host of humble toilers for daily bread, who seem to mount nearer to the skies according to the degree of their poverty. One might almost imagine that the promise of easier access to Heaven than is accorded to the rich, gave them this upward tendency.

In one of these lofty habitations for the lowly, a hundred and forty steps led to an apartment in the sixth story, where Everard de la Roche lodged, with his wife and daughter. The bareness of the room betokened an absence of worldly possessions. The red-tiled floor had no covering, the windows no curtains, the bed no drapery. Indeed, the latter was merely a framed canvas that could be folded up at pleasure. A few yards of faded calico, stretched across the further corner, divided the apartment into a smaller chamber. In one window feebly bloomed a pot of unhealthy-looking mignionette—the favorite flower of the French poor, and often to be found in their meanest abodes. The enumeration of the furniture will occupy little space. It consisted of a washstand, four rush-bottomed chairs, a low stool, a worm-eaten chest, the receptacle of the family wardrobe, a tiny charcoal cooking-stove, and yonder—strangely unsuited to the place—a piano! An old, battered affair, with keys as yellow as a tobacco-chewer's teeth, but still a veritable piano. Just above the venerable instrument, an unpainted deal shelf held a number of broken-backed books, some pieces of music, and a tin cup containing a few common flowers. Upon a corresponding shelf on the opposite side of the room, were various kitchen utensils, neatly arranged; a cupboard beneath enclosed a sparse supply of crockery and other household goods.

It is June, and the twilight of a long summer day is approaching.

Several sheets of music are scattered upon the floor. The piano is open;—on the three-legged stool before it sits a young girl. Her head rests upon one arm, which is stretched over the instrument as though she had fallen forward from exhaustion; the other arm hangs listlessly by her side—she is asleep.

The outline of her undeveloped form is delicate, yet too angular for grace. The coarse gray stocking and rough shoe cannot wholly disguise the smallness and shapeliness of a foot and ankle somewhat liberally revealed by her position. Her complexion is sickly, almost sallow in its hue. Her features are too much sharpened by want and suffering, to be deemed handsome; but the mingled blandness and firmness of the mouth, the thin, slightly curved nostrils, and the broad brow, indicate force of character. The only impression of beauty is conveyed by the arch of the slender eyebrows, the length and darkness of the lashes that lie upon her colorless cheeks, the silkiness and luxuriance of the purple black hair that, escaping from her comb, sweeps down her shoulders, and falls, like a rich veil, over the yellow piano-keys. Her garb is very humble, simply a dark blue calico dress, relieved by a narrow linen collar and cuffs, and a white apron. Her appearance is so child-like—so immature that one can hardly believe she has entered her eighteenth year.

Close to the dingy window, as though to catch the last lingering rays of light, sits a pale and mournful-looking woman. With a languid air, she slowly draws the needle in and out of her work, as though even that effort were too great for her strength. Pain has left a faint contraction on her brow, and the shadow of weary dejection that clouds her still comely features tells that she has ceased to fight against the ills of life,—or, rather, that she has been conquered by them, without ever battling at all.

An imperative knock breaks the silence. Before Madame de la Roche can give permission to enter, the door opens, and a face, as sharp and sombre-hued as though it had been cut out of parchment, is thrust into the room, and after the twinkling gray eyes have made a rapid survey, is followed by the spare and diminutive form of an old man, carrying a violin under his arm. Although the heavy eyebrows that meet above his prominent nose, and the bristling moustache that conceals his closely-folding lips, retain their youthful blackness, his long beard and the fringe of hair that enrings his bald head are white as foam. Those small, sharp, restless eyes seem to glance everywhere in an instant, and to pierce what they look upon. The whole countenance is sufficiently sour to set on edge the teeth of a very impressible associate; a striking illustration of that "vinegar aspect" which Shakspeare describes as belonging to those who will not

> "Show their teeth in way of smile,
> Though Nestor swear the jest be laughable."

"Eh? Ah! what's this?" he exclaimed, marching up to the slumbering maiden. "Lazy little owl! This is the way she practises, this is the way she makes use of her time, is it?"

"She has practised five hours without stirring," answered the mother, in a querulous tone. "She fell asleep a few moments ago from sheer fatigue, and I had not the heart to rouse her. You know, Maitre Beaujeu, she practises faithfully seven hours every day. Let her have a little rest!"

"Rest, indeed! Do you suppose *I* ever rest? I can tell you she need not look forward to rest in our profession! How she sleeps, to be sure!"

He stood for a moment contemplating the young girl, who slept on undisturbed by the noise. A close observer might have detected something like compassion under the musician's rude mask of severity.

"Don't disturb her!" pleaded the mother. "You're always so hard upon her!"

Those words extinguished the faintly kindling spark of pity, and awakened the spirit of contradiction, ever strong in Maitre Beaujeu's breast.

"Don't disturb her, when it's the hour for her lesson? That's a pretty joke! Really, you are quite facetious, Madame de la Roche. Do you suppose I have so many hours to spare that I can teach her for nothing, and yet suit my time to hers? Eh, do you think that?"

He turned to Sylvie, and shook her rudely, shouting in her ears, "Wake up! wake up, I say! You are not good-looking enough to be indulged with playing the sleeping beauty!"

Sylvie awoke with a start. Perhaps amazement caused her to open her eyes more widely than was natural, but they seemed too large for her delicate face. Judging from the color of her hair, eyebrows, and lashes, one expected to see a pair of black eyes, and could not but wonder at finding the iris of a clear and not very deep blue.

"Have I been sleeping?" she asked, gathering up her hair in confusion. "Oh, mother, why did you not wake me? I deserve to be well scolded, Maitre Beaujeu," added she, looking up into his face with a smile that said, "but do not give me my deserts; do not scold me!"

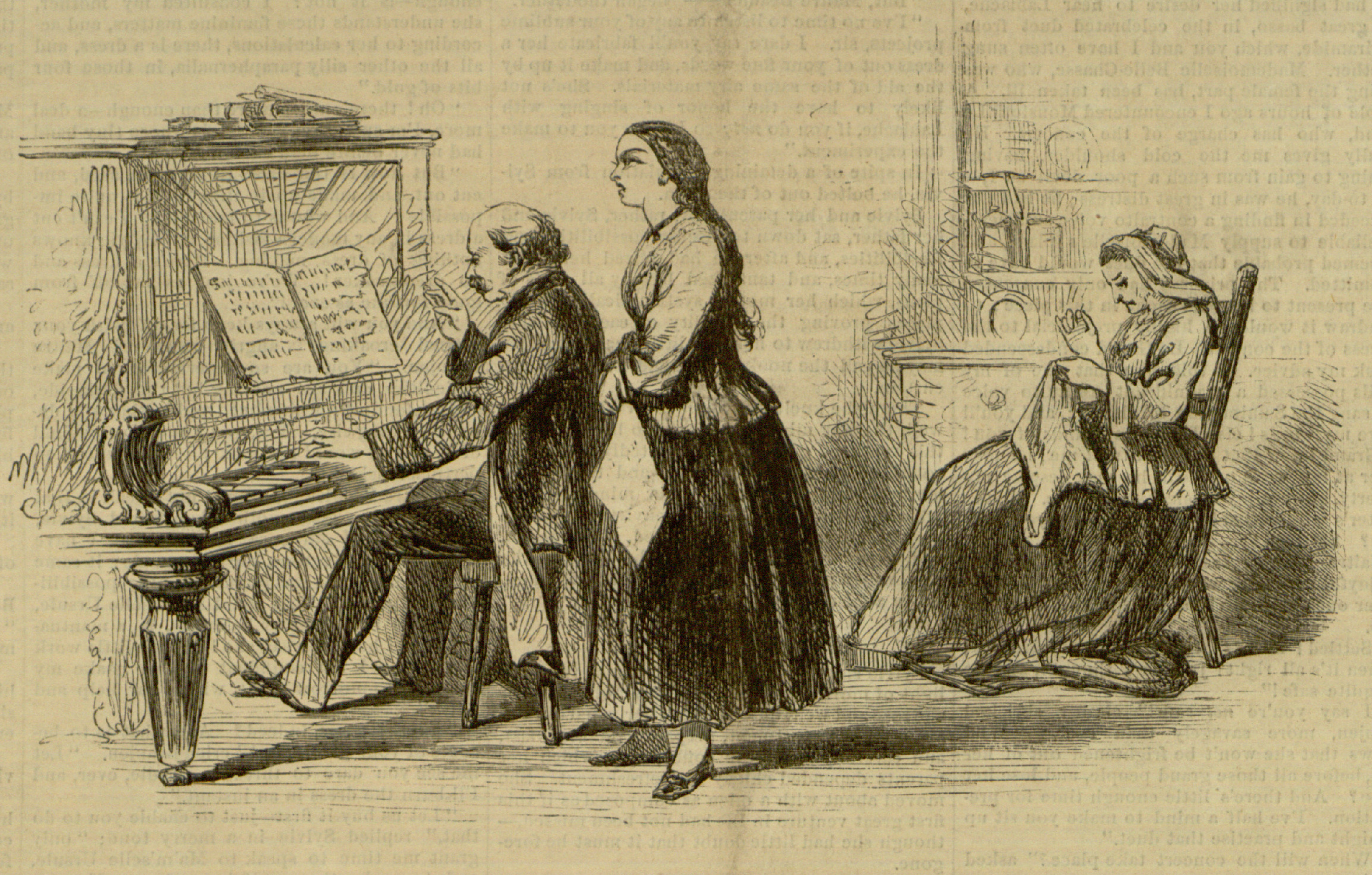
The smile, while it displayed her white and regular teeth, showed that the mouth was too expansive for beauty, though somewhat redeemed by the flexibility of the lips. It was essentially a singer's mouth.

"Don't chatter, scarecrow! To your lesson! Let me hear you sing the air we tried yesterday."

Sylvie succeeded in prisoning the abundant tresses which had several times baffled her, as she attempted to gather them in her small hands.

Maitre Beaujeu laid his violin upon the table as tenderly as though it had been a living thing; indeed, it is doubtful whether he would have dealt so gently with anything alive; took his place at the piano, and played a brief prelude.

Sylvie sang, and Beethoven himself could not have asked for a voice better suited, by its depth and richness, to make vocal his glorious strain. As you listened to her, and looked at her, you could not conceive that from that poor, fragile, feeble little frame, could issue such a volume of delicious sound,—a contralto voice so powerful, so clearly sweet, so touchingly sympathetic, so rare in its combinations and quality. And her own melody seemed to transform her, as it gushed from her lips. The rosy flush that leapt up into her face extinguished its sallow tint—the large mouth took a symmetrical shape—the great eyes filled with a dewy lustre, and grew dark through the dilation of their pupils—mingling all the softness of blue with the brilliancy of black orbs. The angular figure assumed an attitude of unconscious grace—the very spirit of music thrilled through and through her whole being, and moulded its external into a new shape.



THE REHEARSAL.

As she ceased, Maitre Beaujeu gave a growl which might have struck upon a stranger's ear as a signal of displeasure, but Sylvie comprehended his rough approbation. He placed page after page of music before her, and she sang on. Not a word was uttered between the pieces.

The mother had allowed her work to drop upon her lap, but the expression of her countenance told that she did not dare to make any comment, or breathe a word of praise.

During an interval, in which Sylvie was trying to re-arrange the music which had fallen on the floor while she slept, the buzz of whispering outside the door became audible in the silence. Maitre Beaujeu turned sharply round on his stool.

"There they are again! Ill not allow it! I'll not have my pupil sing to an audience that don't pay."

He made a rush to the door, but the movement had been heard without, and the sound of scampering feet ensued. The music master only succeeded in capturing one of the group of listeners; it was Mathieu, the hunchbacked son of Mère Gamboche, who presided over a small booth for the sale of cakes and confections on the *Champs Elysées*, and who lodged on the same story as Sylvie and her parents.

"Ah! I've got you, little rascal, have I? Have I not forbidden any listening at this door? Do you want your long ears chopped off?" And the musician gave an emphatic pull, which must have produced a foretaste of this threatened punishment for the crime of listening.

"Ah! have pity! have pity! Maitre Beaujeu. I could not help it!—indeed I couldn't! I heard her voice as I was going up stairs with a bundle of charcoal for my mother, and couldn't help stopping and listening! Besides, I have brought Ma'm'selle Sylvie her bouquet,—here it is!"

Maitre Beaujeu snatched the flowers and threw them into the passage.

Sylvie, with more courage than could have been anticipated from her timid mien, now came forward. She quietly took up the humble nosegay, saying, "Mathieu is so good he often brings me flowers—indeed, I should never receive any, were it not for him. He knows I like them only too well. Sometimes I fear he robs his sister, Ninette, who sells flowers, of her wares. Pray don't be so hard upon the poor boy, Maitre Beaujeu, he loves music so much, and has so few——"

She could not finish her sentence, for the music master thrust her aside.

"How dare you interfere, you little fright! What do you want with flowers? Do you think they'll make you any handsomer?" Turning to Mathieu, he added, "Get out, now, and let me catch you again—that's all!"

He rounded his sentence with a kick that sent the terrified cripple staggering along the entry. Then, closing the door savagely, returned to the piano.

Sylvie was roused by this cruelty to her unfortunate friend;—she had evidently a high spirit.

"It's too bad, Maitre Beaujeu, to treat Mathieu so! Was it not by the same means you are reproving him for taking, that you first heard my voice? Was it not in passing our door to go to your own room that you heard me sing? And did you not often stop, just as he does? And one day, when I was singing in a rude style of my own—singing my own thoughts to my own tunes—did you not come in and snatch the sewing out of my hands, and say I was made for singing, not sewing? And did you not then propose to teach me? And now you punish Mathieu for listening! A thing you did yourself!"

"And you see no difference in my listening and that little rascally hunchback daring to listen? You are an idiot, and I shall never make anything of you! What if I *did* hear you—and what if I *did* teach you—and what if I *am* wasting time on you every day, as I have done for three years? You are too great a fool for any good to come out of my instructions. You'll never get an opportunity to use your voice and earn your bread by it. You needn't expect that you will!"

"Ah, no!" sighed the mother. "That's just what I always tell her; she'll never have an opportunity! It's waste of time, and the hire of the piano, for which we have to stint ourselves so much, is money thrown away. I was always unlucky—always—and so is every one that belongs to me!"

"Mother, you know I do not believe in *luck*, and Maitre Beaujeu cannot believe what he says. No, my master, you would not waste so many precious hours upon me, if you believed your own words. You tell me that, although I am ugly as an owl, I have a great gift. I should not have known it if you had *not* told me; but as this gift has been entrusted to me, perhaps in compensation for my ugliness and poverty, who knows? God would not have consigned it to my keeping without granting me an opportunity of using it; that is my belief—my faith!"

"All very fine, but *faith* is not a current coin that will buy bread. And you can't always live on hope, though it *is* the natural food of youth. A few years of waiting, and watching, and disappointment, and you will cease to hope, as I do, and as millions have done before, and will do again."

"Not until I cease to believe in the good God!" answered Sylvie, gravely. "And that will never be!"

"Stop your preaching, and come back to your lesson! You get your hopefulness from that reckless father of yours, and much good his inexhaustible stock of hope has done him! Left him nothing but this little hole to lodge his hopes in."

"Ah! nothing ever prospered with him!" murmured Madame de la Roche.

"He don't deserve to prosper!" snarled Beaujeu. "He is always pursuing phantoms, instead of marching under the banner of steady industry. But I suppose we are to spend the rest of the evening in discussions?"

Sylvie's only reply was to resume her place by the piano. Maitre Beaujeu churlishly took his seat, and the lesson continued.

Sylvie's father belonged to an excellent family of Provence—a family who claimed to be the offshoot of nobility. Everard de la Roche was born and bred a gentleman, according to the European acceptation of the word, which means he was born and fitted for no occupation—a gentleman of the aristocratic, do-nothing school. His father's income had been sufficiently large to enable him to live luxuriously *with prudence*, but the son chanced to be wholly deficient in that inestimable quality. When Everard became his father's heir, and found himself with ample means at his command, he proposed to his young wife that they should remove from Provence to Paris, and "see the world;" Paris, to a Frenchman, being the only world worth recognizing.

Hardly had they taken up their residence in the great capital, when Monsieur de la Roche launched into numberless extravagances. He was one of those light-hearted, sanguine men, who never look beyond the hour. He squandered his property in the most reckless manner. Now and then, as he felt his substance melting away, he embarked in some hazardous but Golconda-promising speculation, which usually left him poorer than before.

In a few years his means were exhausted. He then resorted to borrowing from any source that was accessible. He had no scruples of delicacy, for he always *promised*, and *intended* to pay—*when he could;* but scorned to contemplate the possibility that *such* a day might *never* come. He did not experience the faintest gratitude for these loans; they were a matter of business, he asserted. He never economized the money thus acquired, but often expended, for an hour's indulgence, a sum that would supply his family in food for a week.

By the time Sylvie had entered her tenth year, her father was reduced to such poverty that, one after another, all the valuables he possessed, down to his wife's jewelry and clothes, he sold for bread. He had wearied out the patience, and drained the generosity of his former friends, who shunned, and finally cut, the unscrupulous borrower. The prospect of actual starvation now forced him to exert himself; but he found it difficult to secure employment, and quite as hard to force himself to work when it was obtained. He had latterly fallen in with a notary who supplied him with a small amount of copying—drudgery for which he was scantily compensated.

Madame de la Roche resorted to her needle, a woman's unfailing resource, and earned a few francs each week. Sylvie aided her in this humble pursuit, until the gift of her magnificent voice was discovered by Maitre Beaujeu.

The music-master was a morose, and seemingly selfish old man; wretchedly poor, but too proud and too ascetic to assume the winning suavity and resort to the cajoleries, by which many less skillful of his brethren gained pupils and won appreciation. His few scholars barely enabled him to support a bed-ridden mother, and the aged domestic who attended upon her. But, in spite of his hardness and coldness, he adored his art; all the deep-lying tenderness of his impenetrable soul found vent in music. As stern as Luther, he was as easily melted by melody. While contemplating his ordinary appearance, it was as difficult to conceive the transforming softness produced upon him by harmonious sounds, as it is to picture Luther playing on his beloved flute, or sweet-sounding guitar, and exclaiming with enthusiasm:

"It is the art of the Prophets! it is the only other art which, like theology, can calm the agitation of the soul, and put the devil to flight!"

Most assuredly, nothing else had power to put to flight the demons of ill-temper that perpetually haunted Maitre Beaujeu.

After the venerable musician by chance heard Sylvie's wonderful contralto voice, he paused to listen to it again and again, until its undeveloped capacity almost drove him wild. One day, losing all control over himself, he burst into the room, snatched away her work, and exclaimed:

"I'll teach you! Never touch a needle again!" Then regarding her in undisguised disappointment, added: "what a pity you are so ugly! But it shall not matter!"

That voice had caused him to picture to himself a face and form as nearly angelic as could be found in mortal mould; and his disappointment can only be estimated by those who feel equal idolatry for physical beauty.

The homely Sylvie proved the most tractable and persevering of his pupils; but the loss of her needle, little as it earned, and the expense of hiring even that old, dilapidated piano, (which, however, Maitre Beaujeu himself kept in the most perfect tune,) caused her parents to endure greater privations than ever.

Her father, with his usual buoyancy, joyfully seized upon the new hope awakened by Maitre Beaujeu, and indulged in the wildest visions of the future. But the mother's spirits were not revived by the cheering prospect. She shook her head when Sylvie and her father talked of prosperity, and expressed her firm conviction that prosperity would never be a guest at *their* fireside.

In Sylvie's disposition the two extremes, which characterized the temperaments of her parents, had been escaped; the tendencies she inherited from the one counterbalanced those imparted by the other, and a *juste milieu* was the happy sequence! In place of the vaguely wild hopefulness of her father, she possessed a cheerful confidence; and instead of being prone to her mother's ceaseless anticipations of evil, she experienced a placid preparation for disappointment, as very possible, and therefore very endurable.

Sylvie's feeble frame betrayed the ill effects of her constant confinement, and the unflagging diligence with which she studied. She grew thinner and thinner, and more and more pallid, each day; and yet an incomprehensible strength revealed itself in the sweet sounds that woke beneath her attenuated fingers, and issued from her colorless lips—the strength of inspiration!

Her child-life had been brief; sorrow had quickly ushered her into womanhood. Poverty and privation were familiar to her, and she felt them less keenly than her parents. The necessity of encountering the rude moods of her ascetic master was a far greater trial. She shrank from unkindness, she yearned for the fostering voice of encouragement and approval; but Maitre Beaujeu was niggardly of commendation, and her happiest efforts were only rewarded by a dubious growl. Far worse than this, he often attacked her mother, and unsparingly ridiculed her father's follies. At such times Sylvie's brave spirit was stirred to rebellion, she conquered her awe, took part in the wordy warfare, and boldly stood between her tutor and her parents, diverting the wrath of the former to herself, to shield those who were too fearful of his ill-will to resent his insolence.

When Sylvie's lesson was concluded, Maitre Beaujeu, instead of taking his departure, turned to the table, opened the old case that contained his violin, gently took out the instrument, and without comment sat down and played. There could be no surer sign that he was pleased with his pupil.

Sylvie crouched upon a low stool, resting her weary head upon her mother's knees. Her large eyes were fixed intently upon her master, and her whole soul flashed into her face; now and then a low murmur of ecstasy broke from her parted lips, and her slight frame quivered as though with an electric shock.

The mother's hand softly smoothed her daughter's silken hair, and the habitual look of sorrow began to fade out of Madame de la Roche's wan face, as though it had been swept away either by that flood of melody, or by the contemplation of Sylvie's silent rapture.

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* The title of this tale sounds paradoxical, but the reader is solicited not to judge of its appropriateness until after the perusal of the narrative.

The trio had not heard the opening of the door, and were unconscious that any one had entered the apartment, though, close beside Maitre Beaujeu stood a tall and handsome man, boyishly jovial in appearance. His complexion was florid as that of a mountain maid; his fair hair clustered over a low, but exceedingly white, brow; his large eyes were of a clear, and very light, blue; his rosy mouth seemed especially fashioned for smiles. Though his dress was shabby in the extreme, there was a certain degree of stylishness about his deportment which communicated itself to his attire. Perhaps his fine figure, falling shoulders, broad chest, and rounded limbs, would have given an air of elegance to any apparel.

Maitre Beaujeu chanced to look up, and with a scowl, he instantly stopped playing, and laid his violin in its case.

"Go on, go on, Maitre Beaujeu," cried Monsieur de la Roche, in a lively tone; "finish that strain. It is really ravishing!"

"Thank you, I've played enough; too much, rather, for I like to choose my audience, and was not aware of the *honor* of your presence."

"Well, well, as you like," said de la Roche, good-humoredly; "we must not quarrel with one who has been such a friend to my little girl here. But, Maitre Beaujeu, when will you obtain her a hearing? Just at this moment I'm hard pressed for funds; our treasury is reduced to its last franc, and that confounded notary had no copying for me to-day. There's nothing left that can be transferred to the pawnbroker. Sylvie is our only hope. When will you get her a hearing? That's the question."

"In all probability, *never*," answered Beaujeu, gruffly. "I see no likelihood of an opportunity. Possibly, she'll carry her voice unheard to the grave. Plenty of voices quite as fine, have gone there unrecognized, and more will follow."

"Ah!" sighed the mother, "that's just my belief. I brought ill luck to Everard by marrying, when I might have done so much better and married a Marquis, only my evil stars would not permit it, and now there's nothing but poverty and misery before us."

"Very convenient, to lay your own bad taste and Monsieur de la Roche's improvidence to the charge of the stars. What have the stars to do with your making a bad choice, and his squandering his fortune, and sending his family destitute?"

Beaujeu snatched up his cap, and with his dear violin under his arm, shuffled out of the room, without paying the least attention to Monsieur de la Roche's attempt at self defence.

CHAPTER II.

A TOILETTE DILEMMA.

After Maitre Beaujeu took his abrupt departure, Sylvie made an effort to conquer her lassitude and prepare the frugal repast of her parents. It consisted only of soup, salad, and coarse bread, but the table was neatly spread, and, in the centre, she placed the tin cup with Mathieu's humble bouquet.

During the meal Madame de la Roche was silent, absorbed as usual in her own gloomy thoughts. Sylvie was too much exhausted to converse, but her buoyant-spirited father discoursed at length upon the various methods by which, if the Fates only smiled, he might rapidly make a fortune, and resume his former position in society. Year after year he had clearly demonstrated how this desirable object might be obtained; but the great wheel which was *suddenly* expected to turn, and send *him* upward with a bound, never seemed to move; and his airy castles invariably exploded, and left him, for a season, prostrate and disheartened. His wife, who had lost all faith in his intangible schemes, only sighed and shook her head, as she slowly sipped her soup; but Sylvie's filial respect caused her to listen with that attention which great talkers look upon as the most gratifying response.

The next day Maitre Beaujeu did not appear at his accustomed hour, and Sylvie, whom he would not have found slumbering again, looked for him with growing disquietude.

Her mother had several times declared, during dinner, that she was inwardly troubled by strange and undefined misgivings; premonitions that evidently pointed at Maitre Beaujeu. De la Roche was unusually taciturn, and Sylvie found it difficult to preserve her wonted cheerfulness.

The meal was over; she had risen to clear the table, when, without knock of warning, the door flew open, and Maitre Beaujeu burst into the room. Maitre Beaujeu? The amazed trio could scarcely believe that it was really the grave music master. He capered about, with his violin under his arm, flung up his cap and caught it, sang a jovial refrain, and made such mad demonstrations of hilarity, that no wonder Madame de la Roche shrank away in terror. Her husband, too, looked as though he were meditating the best means of capturing the lunatic; but Sylvie sprang towards him with outstretched hands.

"Oh! my master, what ails you? what is the matter?"

He caught her in his arms, hugging her and the violin in the same embrace; he kissed her forehead and cheeks, almost frantically, and in a voice half laughter, half tears, shouted, "What is the matter? the matter? Child, it has come! it has come! At last! at last!"

"What has come, dear Maitre Beajeu?"

In answer he folded her anew to his breast; the violin still sharing the caress, and pressing against her slight frame rather more roughly than was agreeable. "Your trust was not in vain! The good God has rewarded your faith in his own good time!"

"What then has happened?"

"The chance for you to be heard has arrived—the opportunity for me to present a pupil before competent judges has come! Judges who knew what music means—none of your new-fangled pretenders, but *true* judges."

Sylvie could not utter a single word; her hands were clasped, her eyes upraised with an expression of fervent gratitude. The next moment she burst into tears and hid her face upon the old man's shoulder.

"Maitre Beajeu, my dear friend, it's just what I expected!" exclaimed de la Roche, with an odd kind of dignity, and repressing all surprise. His demeanor conveyed the impression that he was only receiving his deserts, and could not be elated by an event which he had the right to anticipate. "Let me assure you, my dear sir, that this was always what I always looked for, and now all will be as it should be! We shall be obliged to hire decent apartments at once, and get a few comforts around us, and I don't doubt that Christmas will find me driving that noble pair of greys which I have so long desired to possess. I have a strong partiality for greys—I shall not consent to buy horses of any other color. But I don't doubt that we will easily find a pair to suit!"

Maitre Beaujeu's unwonted tenderness vanished.

"You don't doubt, don't you? Then let me tell you, sir, I *do doubt*. The card houses you are such an adept in building will tumble down as fast as they went up, and the greys will run away with your reason before you ever hold their reins. That's your luck, you know; so your wife says, and she has secret information from the abode of the blue devils!" Saying this, he pushed Sylvie rudely from him. "What are you playing the fool for? What are you crying about, and making yourself look uglier than ever? It's a great misfortune you have no beauty to part with!" The musician turned again to de la Roche, and asked, tauntingly, "What if I *have* obtained a hearing for her, who says she'll succeed?"

"Ah! who indeed?" responded Madame de la Roche, wofully. "It's not to be expected."

"Certainly not, Madame, you're quite right, your unlucky stars will occupy themselves in taking care to prevent success," returned Beaujeu ironically. "Therefore it is not a matter for such *very* great rejoicing; though I this very evening obtained permission for her to sing at a charitable concert to be given at the residence of the Count Castellane."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Sylvie. "My dear master, how did you accomplish anything so wonderful?"

"It was no doing of mine, it accomplished itself—it was a chance that turned up!"

Sylvie shook her head. "A chance? No, it was——"

"Stuff! I've heard all that before; you don't believe in *chance*, but a chance it was, and a chance of which I had the wit to take advantage. The Princess Clementine has promised to honor the Count by her presence, accompanied by several members of the royal family. The princess had signified her desire to hear Lablache, the great basso, in the celebrated duet from Semiramide, which you and I have often sung together. Mademoiselle Belle-Chasse, who was to sing the female part, has been taken ill. A couple of hours ago I encountered Monsieur Le Grand, who has charge of the concert. He usually gives me the cold shoulder, having nothing to gain from such a poor devil as I,—but, to-day, he was in great distress; he had not succeeded in finding a contralto voice sufficiently reliable to supply Mademoiselle's place, and it seemed probable that the duet would have to be omitted. The princess had only consented to be present to hear Lablache in this piece; to withdraw it would be highly prejudicial to the success of the concert. Le Grand condescended to ask my advice. I told him that one of my pupils possessed a magnificent contralto voice and sang the Semiramide brilliantly; and you'll prove my words! else I wash my hands of you! Le Grand knew that he could trust me; he may sneer at my worn out coat, he may despise my poverty, but not my musical knowledge. So the matter's all settled! Settled! Do you hear that? Settled!"

Maitre Beaujeu seemed inclined to resume his joyful capering, when the voice of Sylvie's father once more revived his habitual churlishness.

"Settled! *settled!*" he repeated rapturously; "Then it's all right! just as I thought, and we are quite safe!"

"I say you're *not* safe!" almost shrieked Beaujeu, more savagely than ever. "Who knows that she won't be frightened out of her wits, before all those grand people, and lose her voice? And there's little enough time for preparation. I've half a mind to make you sit up all night and practise that duet."

"When will the concert take place?" asked Sylvie.

"When? The day after to-morrow, to be sure;—only two days for preparation."

"Two days!" cried Madame de la Roche, dolefully. "Oh! it's impossible! How shall we get her ready? How shall we make her a dress to wear? And how shall we ever buy her the dress, to say nothing of shoes, and stockings, and gloves, and a sash, and a handsome handkerchief?"

"Don't talk to me of dresses, woman!" replied Beaujeu. "What has a dress to do with her voice? These women are such torments! It's always to some stupid trivialities they attach importance. It don't matter what she wears. Let her be clothed decently—that's enough!"

"That's just the trouble. How are we to manage to clothe her *decently?* Besides the dress she has on she has only one other,—her *best*, and that a shabby mousseline de laine, faded and darned, and three years old. You know nothing about these affairs, Monsieur Beaujeu, but I, her mother, say you could not take her among ladies and gentlemen in a mousseline de laine dress three years old, and very much the worse for wear."

"No, I fear not, my master," Sylvie responded.

"Here's a tempest in a teapot! Here's an insurmountable barrier to what I have been working to accomplish these three years, and all raised by a woman's gown! Instead of rejoicing at this unexpected good fortune—instead of being out of your senses with delight at the honor of singing with Lablache, and before some of the royal family, you make a mountain of difficulties out of a dress! The style of her costume I suppose won't alter the quality of her voice?"

"No—no, of course, it won't," said de la Roche; "but you know the gentle sex are prone to dwell a *little too much* upon outside show; they must be pardoned, my dear sir, for this very natural weakness. Sylvie will do you credit, and herself credit, and us credit, and redeem our fortunes, no matter what dress she has on! People won't look at her old mousseline de laine, nor at her sallow, little face, when they hear her voice. A new dress is quite out of the question;—we have not a sou left to buy one,—we cannot get it on credit,—and there's nobody we can borrow from,—so that settles the question of the dress. Sylvie will make a hit, and she'll soon have dresses in abundance. We will robe her like a queen! And I rather think her mother's wardrobe and mine will require considerable replenishing;—I should not like to say how long I've worn this coat."

As the father complacently uttered these words, Beaujeu walked up to him, almost threateningly.

"Sir, I'll not say what I consider you;—you know less even than your wife and daughter. You talk unmitigated nonsense! Your daughter will not be introduced to the public by me, unless she is properly attired;—and since you cannot provide her with a dress——"

"And with shoes, and stockings, and gloves, a sash, and a handsome handkerchief," broke in the mother.

"And with shoes, and stockings, and gloves, a sash, and a handsome handkerchief," scornfully echoed Maitre Beaujeu; "and since all these absurdities are needful to a woman's toilette, down tumbles your cardhouse, as I said it would, for she will not sing at the Count Castellane's concert."

"Just our luck!" cried the mother. "The most glorious opportunity in the world offers, and we lose it for want of a few Louisd'or to buy a dress!"

"Who says you lose it!" thundered Maitre Beaujeu.

"Why, she cannot go *without* a dress," returned the mother, with a faint flash of spirit;—"and we cannot purchase one;—where are we to pick up the sixty or seventy francs, which it would cost to procure a suitable toilet? I do not think we could ever get the dress made in time, if it were lying here at this moment;—and we could not pay for any one to make it;—so it's all over!" And Madame de la Roche folded her hands with a resigned, give-up sort of expression, and drew a deep sigh.

"Since the dress seems to be an insuperable obstacle, and absolute necessity, perhaps you could help us," suggested de la Roche to the music teacher, nothing daunted, for it was not easy to dash his hopes.

"I? No, sir no! I have not the means. Not that I would throw the money away in buying girls' dresses, if I had. I expended my last Louisd'or this day in paying my poor mother's confounded doctor. I have not a franc left, no, not a sou."

Sylvie, who had been standing musing, now laid her hand gently on his arm, and said: "My dear master, *what is to be done?* We must make an effort, this opportunity must not be lost,—a plain dress, of some kind, must be procured, and must be made, and in time. I do not see the way, but I *do* see that it must be done, and that we have not a moment to lose."

"She monopolizes the sense of this family, as well as its talent," ejaculated the master. "You are right, Sylvie, it must be done; but *how* it is to be done I cannot divine, any more than yourself. The articles they say you need cannot be purchased without gold, any more than your dress can be made without hands. If I had the money you should have it; I tell you, I have *not* got it;—and I cannot borrow it,—so my good intentions will not help you."

"But, Maitre Beaujeu——" began the father.

"I've no time to listen to any of your sublime projects, sir. I dare say you'll fabricate her a dress out of your fine words, and make it up by the aid of the same airy materials. She's not likely to have the honor of singing with Lablache, if you do *not;* so I leave you to make the experiment."

In spite of a detaining ejaculation from Sylvie, he bolted out of the room.

Sylvie and her parents, or, rather, Sylvie and her father, sat down to discuss possibilities and feasibilities, and after he had raised her hopes many times, and tantalized her by all sorts of plans, which her mother systematically tore to pieces, proving the fragility of each scheme, Sylvie withdrew to her own little chamber, if we may so call the nook partitioned off by the old curtain.

There she knelt down to pray, that, if it were well, the way might be shown to her by which this apparent good, so unexpectedly presented, could be rendered available; and though no method suggested itself to her mind, she rose up, comforted by the certain conviction that the desired means would be revealed, *if it were best*, and, if not revealed, it would be because the step, which promised so largely, would, if taken, prove a false one.

CHAPTER III.

MAITRE BEAUJEU'S VIOLIN.

Sylvie slept little that night, but as the grey light of morning stole into her humble chamber she rose and went quietly about her usual duties; arranged the apartment, prepared the breakfast, and carefully made the coffee, upon which her parents depended chiefly for refreshment. She moved about with a mien as composed as if this first great venture in life had not been missed,—though she had little doubt that it must be foregone.

On opening the door to receive her daily supply of milk, she encountered Maitre Beaujeu passing hastily through the entry, with his beloved violin under his arm. Sylvie started to see him at this early hour, for he was habitually a late riser, and often owned his fondness for the pleasant morning nap—that sweet semi-conscious slumber, which is too light to be haunted by troubled dreams, too deep to be disturbed by waking anxieties. Sylvie remarked that the musician's face was far paler than usual—it looked positively cadaverous. He was too much abstracted to perceive her until she saluted him, then his features worked convulsively, and, with an agitated air, he muttered:

"Go in—go in. I don't want to see you!"

"But, my master," began Sylvie, beseechingly, and advancing towards him.

"Don't come near me, little owl; you look hideous this morning! Don't speak to me, I say; I'll not hear a word. There's your chamber door open, and, I tell you, if I should catch a glimpse of that silly mother and weak father of yours,—or if I even heard their voices, I could not answer for my own resolution; so get into your room, will you? Shut your door, and don't molest me!"

For once Sylvie seemed inclined to disobey, but he waved her off, and rushed down the stairs.

"How strangely he looks! What can ail him?" she murmured. "He never goes out at this hour; he has no lessons to give so early in the morning, yet he had his violin! Perhaps he could not sleep, after the dreadful disappointment of last night, and has gone to wander about until the hour for his first lesson arrives. Ah! no one gives him credit for possessing the kind heart that lies hidden under his rough exterior. He would not speak to me because he had not courage to allude to this severe trial to us both. Yet I should have told him that I could bear it patiently, hopefully; other chances may come as unexpectedly as this one came,—who knows! And perhaps I should only fail if I sang at a concert with so little preparation; that must be the reason why I am prevented from making the attempt."

Thus this trustful, calm-spirited young maiden consoled herself as she returned to her labors.

Breakfast consisted only of bread and coffee, and was soon over. Sylvie and her parents had partaken of the meal almost in silence. Her mother looked positively ill from the absence of all rest during the night, and her father, whose states of high excitement were usually followed by fits of dejection, was now painfully depressed. In these moods, he seldom talked, but Sylvie knew how much he suffered, when he silently kissed her forehead, and departed to seek occupation; for, at that moment, he was wholly out of employment.

As the door closed after him, Sylvie turned caressingly to her melancholy mother, stole the needle she was mechanically threading, out of her hands, and entreated her to lie down and try to sleep. Madame de la Roche, who really felt unable to sit up, made but feeble opposition to her daughter's wish. In a few moments she fell into a profound slumber. Sylvie did not venture to open the piano for fear of rousing her, but took up the piece of sewing she had coaxed out of her weak hands, and sat down by the open window.

Without the casement, stood the small pot of mignionette—one of Mathieu's humble offerings. The summer air, passing over the flowers, carried their delicate aroma into the room, and Sylvie smiled involuntarily, as she inhaled the perfume. That odorous breath was a pleasant and hopeful messenger. Those flowers grew in obscurity, were gazed upon only by the eyes of poverty, yet they absorbed the bright sunshine, and drank in the rain, and blossomed, and gave out the sweet odor with which they were endowed; their gift of fragrance was not *wasted*, for it often gladdened her and her sad mother, who had so little gladness in their lives. Would Sylvie's own gift prove more valueless than that of a lowly flower? The humble blossoms seemed to answer with their sweetness: "No—this scent for us, and that voice of melody for you, and both for some use."

A bang at the door, which flew back as if it were kicked open, broke the mother's slumber. She sprang up, with a faint cry.

"No piano going? all quiet? Have you fallen asleep again, lazybones?" exclaimed Maitre Beaujeu, noisily entering.

Sylvie rose and was about to explain.

"How do you expect, at this rate, to be ready with the Semiramide to-morrow night—eh?"

"To-morrow night!" cried Sylvie, joyfully.

"Yes, to-morrow night, parrot! Are you not to sing in a duet with Lablache, at the Count Castellane's to-morrow night?"

"Am I, truly?"

"Truly you are, and if you don't sing *true*, I've done with you forever."

"But the dress?"

"I hold it in the palm of my hand."

"And the shoes, and stockings, and gloves, and sash, and handkerchief?" chimed in Madame de la Roche, as she sat upon the side of the bed.

"All in the same small compass,—see!" and he caught Sylvie's hand, and closed her slight fingers over four gold coins;—three Louis d'or and a half.

"Oh! my master! my master! how shall I ever thank you! How have you done this?"

"What's that to you? *It is done*, that's enough. It will buy what you need to make you presentable, won't it, little fright? It won't make you handsome, but it will let the people hear a voice that is worth all the beauty in the world. It's enough—is it not? I consulted my mother, she understands these feminine matters, and according to her calculations, there is a dress, and all the other silly paraphernalia, in those four bits of gold."

"Oh! there's much more than enough—a deal more, I'm sure," replied Sylvie whose tiny hand had never before held such a treasure.

"But how is the dress to be purchased, and cut out, and made up in time? It is quite impossible! And who is to make it? *I* can't cut a dress in any modern fashion, and Sylvie knows nothing of dress making. Here's a dress and no dress-maker! We're just as far off from good fortune as ever!"

"And you will always keep far off with your eternal croaking!" angrily answered Maitre Beaujeu. "You are so determined to make difficulties, and see nothing but the dark side, and be fond of nothing but trouble, that you deserve nothing else. Yes, you know you *are* fond of it, or you would not seek after difficulties so pertinaciously."

"Maitre Beaujeu, you must not speak in that manner to my dear mother," answered Sylvie, seriously. "I am sure, mother, that I have found a way of getting the dress made; it came into my head as I was pondering over possibilities last night. That good Ma'm'selle Ursule, who lives in the story below us, is a mantua-maker. I heard her say she had very little work just now. I am confident she can make my dress by to-morrow night, with your help and mine."

"*Yours? yours*, indeed? And what is to become of your practising?" cried Beaujeu. "Let me see you dare to thread a needle, ever, and I'll burn the dress in an instant."

"Let us buy it first—just to enable you to do that," replied Sylvie in a merry tone; "only grant me time to speak to Ma'm'selle Ursule, and to make the needful purchases, (for my mother is so much indisposed this morning that she cannot go out,) and then I will faithfully practise for the rest of the day. When you come this evening, you shall see what progress I have made."

Sylvie threw her shabby mantle over her shoulders as she spoke, tied on her old straw bonnet, and was hastening out of the room, but stopped suddenly, and went up to Maitre Beaujeu.

"Oh, how selfish and thoughtless I am! I do not pause to tell you how grateful you have rendered me! I do not ask you what sacrifice you have made to obtain this money, and I am sure you have made one. *That* was your errand out so early this morning. Tell me, my master, how you borrowed these seventy francs?"

"Chatterbox, get away, will you? What business is it of yours? What have you to do with my private affairs? Let me hear no more impertinent questions."

Sylvie saw that her master was in earnest. He nervously pulled at his moustache, and his mouth twitched as though he were affected by some unpleasant recollections.

"Then I will only ask if you will be here at the usual time this evening."

"I intend to come two hours earlier, so, be ready."

"But your pupils?"

"I shall give no lessons to-day." Maitre Beaujeu cleared his throat with some violence, for his voice was husky; then he took from his old horn box a large and consolatory pinch of snuff.

"No lessons? Why——"

"Do you intend to stand there chattering all day? Do you intend to forget all about that dress, without which a girl can't make music any more than a harp without strings?"

"I am going; adieu, Mamma."

Sylvie ran gaily down the stairs, and the music master retired to his chamber.

As Ma'm'selle Ursule had passed her youth, and even her prime, and was still unmarried, we are compelled to designate her as an old maid. She was a brisk, bright, soft-hearted creature, who took almost as much interest in the young as though they brought back her youth, yet felt as great sympathy with the aged as though she had always been old. Indeed, she seemed ever ready to enter into the joys or sorrows, the hopes or schemes of others, partly because any intercourse with the world interrupted the monotony of her existence, and partly because she was naturally unselfish.

Sylvie was her chief favorite, though she saw her but seldom. She had long been acquainted with the object of the musical education the young girl was receiving from Maitre Beaujeu, and Sylvie's present communication filled her with delight. She engaged to commence the dress with all speed, and in a few moments was ready to sally forth to make the needful purchases.

Ursule did not lack the good taste which is characteristic of her countrywomen. She selected for Sylvie's attire a simple white muslin. If the means at command had permitted, it would have been a very fine instead of a rather coarse muslin, but no richer material would have been preferred.

Sylvie listened in astonishment while the shrewd spinster quarrelled about the price, and beat the shop-keeper down *sou* by *sou*. At last the bargain was completed, and the dress secured for forty francs. What an enormous amount it seemed to Sylvie! The same process of cheapening had to be gone through over the stockings, which were bought for two francs, and it was vigorously repeated when the sash, gloves, and the handkerchief were chosen. Six francs were paid for the sash, two and a half for the gloves, and eight for the handkerchief. Five francs more were expended in what mantua-makers style "sundries," leaving but six francs and a half. A shoemaker had next to be visited, and Sylvie's slender foot, when it was encased in a neatly-fitting satin slipper, looked as though it were an inheritance from Cinderella. All Ursule's arguments and entreaties could not obtain the pretty slippers for less than six francs, which left just half a franc out of the seventy Maitre Beaujeu had supplied.

Sylvie was astonished; she had no conception that what seemed to be a little fortune could melt away so rapidly, and apparently without being the result of any extravagance. Only half a franc over! and how was she to pay for the making of the dress? But when she expressed her concern at this deficiency of means, Ursule answered laughingly—

"I don't eat my kind! I would not take payment from one as poor, or poorer, than myself. You will owe me nothing."

Madame de la Roche revived a little as Sylvie displayed her purchases, and when, soon after, Ursule entered the room, armed with thimble and scissors, and other mantua-making implements, the poor invalid was stirred by a pleasant excitement which had been unknown to her for years. Very quickly the white muslin was cut, and fitted, and the two elder women were seated, chattering like magpies in a cage; and Sylvie was at the piano drowning their dissonant voices in a torrent of melody. Such was the disposition of the group when Maitre Beaujeu entered. He gave a contemptuous glance at the feminine finery scattered about, and answered Sylvie so gruffly, as she remarked, upon his early arrival, that Ursule was speedily awed into silence.

By and by she discovered that she had lost the measure of Sylvie's girdle, but it was some time before she could summon courage to approach her, and make a frightened attempt to pass the tape around her slender waist.

"What are you doing there?" demanded Maitre Beaujeu, sternly. "Do you suppose I am going to have my lesson interrupted by any of this foolery?"

Ursule retreated rapidly, and sheltered herself by the side of Madame de la Roche. Sylvie gave the mantua-maker a comical glance, without hazarding a remark, and demurely went on with her lesson. It was closed by her tutor saying:

"No more to-night—it will tire your voice, and we must have it fresh for to-morrow."

He spoke in so kind a tone, that Sylvie thought he would surely reward her by playing on his violin, as usual. She rose and took her place on the little stool beside her mother's feet, her seat of rest; but Maitre Beaujeu had his cap in his hand and was departing.

"Will you not play for me to-night? Why—where is your violin? I never saw you without it before!"

Sylvie noticed for the first time the absence of his inseparable companion.

"What business is that of yours?" replied Beaujeu, tugging fiercely at his moustache. "Have I not the right to do what I please with my own?"

His manner, and the agitation apparent in his voice, betrayed him. Sylvie sprang to his side, almost falling over the white muslin which entangled itself in her feet.

"Oh! my master, the dress! the dress! Your violin—I know! I know!"

Maitre Beaujeu made a movement to repulse her—and tried to deny that her surmise was correct, but fairly broke down, and hid his confusion in repeated pinches of snuff.

"If you had not parted with your violin, I should not have had that dress to wear to-morrow! But your violin that you were so fond of—you have not sold it? Surely, you would not do that?"

"No, no, Sylvie; I could not have done that for any one—hardly for my old mother. I did not think I could have done what I have done, yet there was no other way. I took the violin to a pawnbroker's, close by,—it was like parting with an only child to give it up!—I loved it better, I think, than I could love a child. I could not bear any one to touch it—I charged the man not to handle it——"

Sylvie interrupted him, with more feeling than strict politeness: "Will they pay me to-morrow, if I succeed?"

"Pay you? No, indeed; there was not a word said about payment. You are only singing on trial. Besides, it is a charity concert, and the musicians volunteer their services."

"Then they will not give me anything, and I shall not be able to get back your violin?"

"You certainly will not. If you are wonderfully successful, the count may possibly present you with some little token of regard,—that's often done, but it will be nothing that can put bread into your mouth, or redeem my violin—so don't build castles with your father's style of masonry. Go to bed early—rest, and let me see you fresh in the morning and looking your best—your *least ugly*, I mean. I shall be here soon after breakfast. Remember, no curving your chest in with sewing. I'll not have you take a stitch upon that nonsensical dress!" and he pointed disdainfully at the white muslin as he left the room.

His exit opened the floodgates of Ursule's talk, and how she ran on! Sylvie could not listen, she was thinking of the old man's violin.

Shortly after the music master retired, Monsieur de la Roche entered, looking very low-spirited, but when he beheld the breadths of white muslin scattered about, Ursule's needle flying, and his wife's keeping it rather lagging company, while Sylvie prepared supper, his spirits went up like a sky rocket. He discovered forthwith that he had all day experienced a presentiment that he would find the whole affair settled, and he was equally certain that before the year expired he would drive that noble pair of greys upon the *Bois de Boulogne.*

[TO BE CONTINUED IN OUR NEXT.]

◆

Cause and Effect.—Infinite are the consequences which follow from a single, and often apparently a very insignificant circumstance. Paley narrowly escaped being a baker. Cromwell was near being strangled in his cradle by a monkey; here was this wretched ape wielding in his paws the destinies of nations. Henry VIII. is smitten with the beauty of a girl of eighteen; and ere long "the Reformation beams from Bullen's eyes." Charles Wesley refuses to go with his wealthy namesake to Ireland; and the inheritance which would have been his goes to build up the fortunes of a Wellesley instead of a Wesley; and to this decision of a schoolboy (as Mr. Southey observes), Methodism may owe its existence, and England its military, its civil, and political glory.

◆

Comfort and Muddle.—Comfort is the daughter of Order, and is descended in a right line from Wisdom; she is closely allied to Carefulness, Thrift, Honesty, and Religion; she has been educated by Good Sense, Benevolence, Observation and Experience; and she is the mother of Cleanliness, Economy, Provident Forethought, Virtue, Propriety, and Domestic Happiness. Muddle is descended from the ancient but dishonorable family of Chaos; she is the child of Indifference and want of Principle; educated alternately by Dawdling, Hurry, Stupidity, Obstinacy, Meanness, and Extravagance; secretly united at an early age to Self-Conceit; and parent of Procrastination, Falsehood, Dirt, Waste, Disorder, Destruction, and Desolation.

◆

Will is the root; knowledge the stem and leaves; and feeling the flower.

ALONE.

BY GEORGIANNA HERBERT.

Alone, alone, on a desert plain!
  Alone on a barren shore!
The keen winds smite me with bitter pain,
  And fright me with hollow roar.

No star is out in the murky sky;
  No beacon on earth or sea—
Oh! where is the Angel that held my hand?
  And why has he gone from me?

I stood but now in a fertile glade;
  The Angel was with me there,
And light and warmth o'er my heart were shed
  From his presence bright and fair.

He smiled upon me and promised help;
  I thought that my griefs were past;
I thought that of lonely and dreary days,
  And ways, I had seen the last.

But where is that green and lovely glade?
  And where has my Angel flown?
I freeze, I die, on this barren plain—
  Alone! I am all alone!

◆

THE SILENT WITNESS.

FROM A LAWYER'S DIARY.

BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

I had spent some years in the West, in the practice of my profession, and was on a visit to my friends in New England. Among those who came first in my list of friendship was Fred. Elliott, and I arranged to visit him as soon as I could. Fred. and I had grown up together as boys; we had entered college together; had graduated together; and when I entered upon the practice of law, he entered his uncle's store in the capacity of book-keeper, with a good prospect ahead. And there was another tie between us—a near and dear one—near and dear to us who were both orphans, and who had few relatives living: Fred. had married my own cousin—sweet Hattie Keene. He had married her since I went away, though the event had been upon the docket a long while before. And thus I was to meet two of my dearest friends beneath the same roof.

It was just dusk when the carriage left me at the door of the house which had been pointed out as that occupied by my friend; and which I at once recognized as the former home of old Timothy Elliott, the "uncle" of whom I have spoken. My summons was answered by a light, quick step upon the hall floor; and when the door was opened I recognized the fair, fond features of my dearly remembered cousin. She was five years older than when I saw her last, and had grown to be a little more womanly, and a little more sedate. In fact, she had put on the holiest of all female characters—that of Mother. The beauty, the life, the animation, the smiles, of other years were not gone; but they were elevated with, softened by, and blended into, that nobler character. At first she did not know me; but when I called her by name—when I called her HATTIE, as I used to in the old times—she caught me by the hand, and, in a moment more, had both her white, soft arms about my neck. She was a sister to me in heart and soul, and with a sister's love she greeted me.

We went into the parlor, where an astral lamp was already burning upon the centre-table, and where a fire was reflecting a genial warmth from the polished grate; for it was Autumn, and the evenings were quite cool. Upon a chair, near the table, sat a little boy, of some three years, playing with the richly ornamented bridle of a rocking-horse; while upon the carpet was a gleesome child, not yet able to walk with safety, engaged in tumbling about a large marten muff. And these were Hattie's children—two as bright and beautiful things as ever made music in an earthly home. She told them that I was their Uncle Enoch. She had neither brother nor sister, so I was forced to be an uncle to her children.

Where had I been? What had I been doing? How had I been? Was I married? Did I ever mean to be? and a hundred more questions of like character were showered upon me before I had time to ask any in return. By and by Fred. came. There was a cloud upon his face when he entered the room—I saw it very plainly—but his wife hurried to his side, and kissed him, and whispered in his ear, and in a moment he brightened up; and, when he greeted me, and held my hand, and patted me upon the shoulder, he appeared the same warm, genial spirit as of old. At the tea-table he asked after my fortunes in the distant home I had sought; and when I told him that I had succeeded beyond my most sanguine expectations, and that material wealth was rapidly accumulating for me, he was not only pleased, but intimated that such business and such prospects would suit him.

I laughed outright at what I considered the absurdity of this last idea. It would do very well, I told him for a poor fellow, with only his two hands and his wit to help him, to go off into the western wilds; but for one like him, with an independent fortune at his command, to think of such a thing, was simply ridiculous. He smiled as I spoke, and turned the subject of conversation.

Within an hour after we adjourned to the parlor I was sure that something had gone wrong with my friend. He tried to be cheerful—to talk of our old pranks—and to laugh and joke as in the days of earlier youth; and, as a last resort, he endeavored to arouse himself in caressing his sweet children. But it would not do. I had seen too much. Hattie succeeded better than he did; and yet, as the evening wore on, I could see that there was a heavy load upon her heart as well.

At length the children were abed, and the mother soon followed them. I plainly heard her sob as she left the room; and a smothered groan, which could not escape me, burst from her husband's bosom. Fred. poked up the coals, and then took two or three turns across the floor, after which he returned and sat down near me.

"Enoch," he said, his face now all wrapped in gloom, "perhaps you think I act very strangely."

"I think something is the matter with you," I returned. "Something must have gone wrong."

"You are right. Something has gone wrong. In fact," he added, as a shudder crept over his frame, "a storm has burst upon me, which is to ruin me!"

He spoke this so solemnly, and so steadily, that I knew there must be some deep meaning to it; and I asked him if he could tell me his trouble. Of course he would tell me. He was anxious to tell me; for I was not only one of his dearest friends, but I was a lawyer, and I might possibly assist him.

"You know," said he, "that I went into business with my uncle Timothy. When I was married, he made me come and live in his house; he put the whole establishment into our hands, and he then boarded with us. I had no money—not a dollar; but when I had served him one year as book-keeper, he gave me a good share in the business. Three years ago he died, leaving an estate of about sixty thousand dollars."

"Aye," I replied, as my friend came to a pause, "I heard of all that. There were sixty thousand dollars of good, available funds, after everything was settled."

"Yes," said Fred.

"And," I added, "you came into possession of it."

"Yes," he answered. "There was no will left; or, at least, such was supposed to be the case; and it all came to me, as I was the only near blood relative living. Uncle Timothy had one brother, and one sister. He married when quite young, but his wife died without issue. His sister married a man named Isaac Staffer. This Staffer had one son living by a former wife, but he never had any children by my aunt. He died at the end of two years, leaving her with no means, and she found a home with her brother, taking her step-son with her. In time she died, and the boy was left in my uncle's charge, who kept him until he was one-and-twenty. So much for the sister. The brother married, and had one child, and that child was myself. You know of my parents. My father died when I was a mere child; and my mother died before I graduated. So, you see, I was the only heir to be found. In fact, I was the only representative of uncle Timothy's blood."

"Certainly," I said; "and of course the whole property fell to you."

"Yes," he replied; "and it was given to me; and I took possession, and have opened into a flourishing business. Upon the strength thereof I have entered society, and responsible offices have been put upon me."

"Well," said I, as my friend paused again, "what has happened to disturb all this?"

"I'll tell you," he returned, starting from a moody reverie, into which he had fallen. "Don't you remember that my father and uncle Timothy once had a serious falling out?"

"Yes," I told him. "I have some recollection of it; but that was a good many years ago. We were boys then."

"Aye—it was near twenty years ago," said Fred.; "but I remember it very well, for I remember how badly it made my mother feel. The estrangement lasted for some years; and during that time the bitterness was very strong. My uncle declared that he would have nothing more to do with his brother; and, under the influence of this feeling, he made a will, conveying the great bulk of his property to John Staffer, the son of his sister's husband. You remember that?"

"Yes," I said. And I did remember it very well; for the thing made considerable talk at the time; and the more so, because Staffer, who had married Timothy Elliott's sister, had not been considered much of a man, and it was not generally supposed that the boy, whom he had left upon the care of his wife's relative, gave any promise of a valuable life.

"And," pursued Fred., "you probably recollect that, when my father was very sick, Uncle Timothy came to him, and the quarrel was thrown away, and from that time, while my father lived, their brotherly love was warm and generous."

Yes, I knew all that.

"Well—at that time my uncle spoke of the will he had made, and said he should destroy it; and I believe he did. In fact, I know he did. I know it as well as I know anything which I did not see with my own eyes. Before my uncle died he told me that he should make no will, for there was no need of it. He said I was the only lawful heir, and that was enough.

"My uncle died, and I came into possession of the property; and I have enjoyed it, and have tried to do good with it; and as the years have passed on I have added something to the original fortune, for I have been careful and prudent. In a dark hour, however, a storm has burst upon me. It seemed only a cloud at first; but it has proved a fearful one. John Staffer has returned. He went away ten years ago—went away because my uncle would not give him a home any longer—and has not been back since until within the last year. He has come, and he has laid claim to my property. He claims the whole of it!"

"But how?" I asked, as my friend stopped to take breath.

"You remember Stephen Akers, the old lawyer?" said Fred.

"Aye," I replied. "I know him very well. He has been out West, and done some business there; but he can do no more where he is known, for he has proved himself a villain."

"Ha—do you know this?" cried my friend.

"Yes—I do know it. But what has he to do with you?"

"I'll tell you. In the first place, he used to do business here; and my uncle employed him some."

"I remember that."

"And it was he who made that old will for my uncle."

"Yes—I recollect it now."

"Well," continued Fred., "this old villain of a lawyer came back here about six months ago, and ere long he and John Staffer had their heads together. In a little while Staffer came out and laid claim to my uncle's property; and when he was asked what he meant, he produced a paper which appeared to be the last Will and Testament of Timothy Elliott. And Stephen Akers swears that this is the same will which my uncle made many years ago, and that it has been in his charge ever since. He says that when he went away to the western country he overlooked it among his other papers, and took it along with him. He furthermore declares that he received several letters from Mr. Elliott, asking him to be careful of the will, and keep it, so that it could be brought to light in case of need."

"Of course," said I, "this will must be a fraudulent one."

"Most certainly it is," returned Fred. "And yet it has been admitted to probate. The judge has accepted it."

"And how stands the case now?"

"I have appealed, and it goes up to the Superior Court; and, moreover, the trial comes off to-morrow. For myself, Enoch—if I were alone in the world—I would care little, for I could put forth my energies anew; but, for my wife and children—O! O!—It is hard! hard!"

He buried his face in his hands, and wept aloud; but, in a little while, he became calm again, and I questioned him as I saw fit. Another witness to the will beside Stephen Akers, was living, and he had testified that he believed the instrument now produced was the one to which he put his name. In short, the case looked dark enough; and I dared not give my friend much hope. Yet I promised to think of the matter, and be present with him at the trial.

On the following morning I got away as soon as I could, for I could not bear to witness Hattie's grief; but I promised to come back again; and, as I held her hand at the door, I told her to keep up a good heart.

An uncle of mine, named Ansel Forbes, a brother of my mother, was in town on business, and I meant to see him. He was a paper manufacturer, and worth a handsome property. I found him at his hotel, and passed a happy hour with him; for I had been his pet in boyhood, and it was by his generous bounty that I went through college. I told him about the trial which was coming off, and he said he meant to be present if he could. He had been well acquainted with Timothy Elliott, and he was firmly convinced that the only will which Elliott had ever made had been destroyed.

When the hour of trial arrived it was announced that I would assist in the case, and I took my seat with the counsel already engaged. As the trial went on, it did certainly look dark enough for my friend. Stephen Akers, a dark-browed, foxy looking man, with hair of a grizzled red, which stood out like hedgehog's quills upon his small head, swore that this was the will which he, as Timothy Elliott's attorney, had made eighteen years before; and that it had been in his possession ever since, until he had lodged it in the Probate office. And he also swore to the receiving of letters from Elliott, bidding him to keep the will safe. There was no getting around his testimony. It was plain and direct, and we could not break through it.

An old man named Jackson, who had been one of the witnesses to the old will, testified that he believed the instrument now before him was the one to which he had put his hand. He should say that that was his own signature. He was an honest old fellow, and admitted that he had always supposed that the will had been destroyed.

For our client we as yet had nothing of clear, plain facts to help us. We had any amount of *impressions* and *opinions* in our favor. It had been the impression of all Timothy Elliott's intimate friends that the will which he made had been destroyed. He had talked to them in that way. And yet, not one of them could swear that they ever heard him say, directly, that such was the fact. In short, though the belief in the destruction of that will was so general and so firm, yet we could not present to the jury a FACT to sustain us in the decision.

Had the counsel for the appellant any more testimony to introduce?

Fred. placed his hand, trembling like an aspen, upon my arm., and whispered:

"O, my soul! I am lost!"

He was pale as death, and his suffering was intense. As the case now stood, I could have no hope. Whatever may have been the opinion of the court and the jury upon the right and justice of the thing, there could have been but one opinion upon the law and the fact. My heart sank within me.

Were the counsel for the appellant ready to rest their case?

I held the will in my hand. I believed it to be a forgery. I believed the only will which Timothy Elliott ever made had been destroyed, and that Akers, in consideration of a share in the spoils, had, from the old draft in his hands, forged this instrument, counterfeiting even Jackson's signature so nicely that the simple old man could not disown it. I was about to give the instrument up, and my last faint hope with it, when a dim mark in one corner of the sheet caught my eye. I examined it more closely. It was a stamp—an impression upon the paper—not so large as the mark of a finger's end; but I caught at it, and solved it. Then I bent my head for a moment, to call to mind something of the past.

"What is it?" asked Fred., who had noticed my emotion.

I told him to wait. And then I arose and looked around the court-room. Was my uncle there? Yes. I saw him close by me. I asked that Stephen Akers might be called to the stand again. The wretch saw that I was excited, and he trembled a little when he started in answer to the call, though he was firm enough when he had gained the stand.

"Mr. Akers," said I, controlling myself as well as I could, "you made this will?"

"Timothy Elliott made it," he replied. "I wrote it down for him as he dictated."

"This will is dated," said I, looking at its sign and seal, "'*October third, eighteen hundred and twenty-three.*' That is eighteen years ago this very month."

"Certainly," replied Akers. "That is just when it was made."

"And you swear that this is the identical instrument?"

"I do."

"And you swear that Timothy Elliot set his hand and seal upon this paper at the time herein mentioned?"

"I do," answered the witness. I looked him in the eye, and he must have read in that look something of my thoughts, for his countenance changed and his knees shook beneath him.

I told him that I had done with him.

Then I asked that Ansel Forbes might be called to the stand.

What did I want of him? And my uncle was also anxious to know why he was called upon. But I asked him to please me. So he went up. All eyes were turned curiously upon him, for he was as well known, and stood as high as the Judge, himself.

"Mr. Forbes," said I, "you are a manufacturer of paper?"

He said he was.

"How long have you been engaged in that business?"

He thought a moment, and then replied:

"I entered the business in eighteen hundred and thirty-one; so I have been in it just ten years."

"Now, sir," said I, handing him the instrument which I held, "will you tell me—will you tell the jury—*when that paper was made?*"

He took it, and the moment his eye rested upon it, he started. He gazed upon it more closely—he examined the stamp upon the corner—and then, in a bursting, amazed tone he cried: I MADE IT MYSELF!"

"*When? When?*" I demanded.

"It could not have been over nine years ago; *for here is my mark*—MY NAME—upon it, as I alone have ever stamped paper in this country!" And he showed to the court and to the jury, the mark which he had detected. It was plain enough now—a little oval impression, with the name "A. FORBES" embossed within it. It was defaced and soiled, but not obliterated.

Stephen Akers was trying to make his way from the court room, but the deputy brought him back.

Two wholesale paper dealers were summoned, and when they examined the paper they at once recognized it as of Ansel Forbes' manufacture. They knew it—there could be no question.

And thus, almost miraculously, was the whole current of the affair changed. We gave the case in, and in a very few minutes we had the verdict.

That evening Hattie hung about my neck, and blessed and thanked me until I fairly cried. And Fred., when he tried to speak of what had passed, at once broke down under the weight of joy and gratitude that was upon him. He was safe—his fortune was safe—and his wife and little ones were still blessed.

Some asked me how I happened to detect that little silent witness away up in the corner of that paper. I answered them, that my uncle gave to me half a dozen reams of that same kind of paper when he commenced making it, and I had been using it ever since; so the stamp was very familiar to me. The forger had selected for his wicked purpose a sheet of respectable age; but it had not proved quite old enough to answer the date he had put upon it.

Master John Staffer got off, and went to sea again; but Stephen Akers found his way to the State's Prison, where, for a term of years, he was forcibly restrained from cheating his fellow-men.

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STEP-MOTHERS.

BY ONE OF THEM.

The difference between good and bad step-mothers—for, let who will deny it, there *are* "good" step-mothers—is that the latter give way to nature, and the former don't. For the truth of the matter is, that, seen without the glamour of mother love, children are all more or less trying, and one who is not a blood relation to them has but to let nature work, in order to become a perfect hater of, and tyrant over them.

It is easy enough for any woman, not of their near kindred, to see in a flock of little ones so many ugly and hateful, or at the least, so many careless, stupid, blundering, noisy or artful, mischievous and meddlesome tricks and characteristics, that to love them is a hard job indeed.

This is true even among little girls; but when you come to boys——! we will just intimate to any woman who contemplates undertaking the charge of a widower and his boys, that she had better go into her chamber a little while, and "*hang herself considerably*," and she'll feel better afterwards. But if she *won't* hang herself, it is her duty and her interest, the one as much as the other, to get along with the whole concern in a pleasant, loving manner.

And the only earthly way for her to do this is to force herself to act by those boys as if they were actually her own. *Feel* like an own mother to them, of course she cannot. That is not required, and a woman is a fool to waste her much-needed strength in attempting impossibilities. But actions, words, manners, are subject to our control, and if the woman that has taken possession of those boys' father, and put herself into the place of their own dead mother, don't endeavor to view them from a true mother's standpoint, and to treat them with the favor and consideration of a true mother, she ought to be dealt with without judge or jury.

Precisely *here* comes the split between bad and good step-dames. The bad one allows herself to see, in those troublesome boys, *only* troublesome boys, and she grows to feel that they are a sore annoyance, and that they deserve no part in home comforts or joys. She grows to think that everything spent on or for them is thrown away. But the good step-dame views, in the great, troublesome fellows, the precious treasures of a dead mother's heart, and with single purpose she strives to treat them accordingly.

If the second wife have children, she is the more strongly tempted to consider the faults of the first lot as good reason for making a difference between them and her dears. Not that she would be *confessedly* unjust—oh, no; she hides from her own eyes (but from no others) her selfishness; but *her* children are, *she* thinks, so pretty, so bright, so interesting, so *well worth* all a mother's care and pains, that they really *ought* to have more indulgences and advantages than that other wild set. They are so affectionate, too, (ah! the poor children whose mother is beneath the sod are not apt to appear affectionate—they dare not—their little hearts are frozen) that it seems natural and easy to pet them, and wink at their little peccadilloes. Well, now, while the natural woman gives full way to all these selfish views and emotions, and allows herself every year to become more interested in the welfare of her own, and less so in that of the first wife's children, measuring their relative deserts by her own feelings, and often hardly aware that there is a virtue in those unhappy "first ones," the woman of sense and nobleness just says to her heart, when she finds it starting off on the same track, "Here, *stop*—you can't go one step in *that* path. *Suppose there comes a third wife*, as very likely there may, would *she* think *my* children any more deserving of favor and love than the first ones are? My rule must be, 'Deal with the children of the dead mother as kindly, patiently, lovingly and justly as I would wish to have mine dealt with by *my* successor. In short, I must make my yearning love for my own brood the rule of action towards all that call my husband father."

And in this spirit does the good step-mother act. She resolutely refuses to look on the trying side of "those first children." All that there is in them of good she diligently seeks for, and makes the most of, and so behaves to them that they fully confide in, and sincerely honor and love her.

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THE CROCODILE AND THE BOA.

A foreign correspondent thus describes a fight which he witnessed between a boa-constrictor and a crocodile in Java:

It was one morning that I stood beside a small lake, fed by one of the rills from the mountains. The waters were clear as crystal, and everything could be seen to the very bottom. Stretching its limbs close over this pond, was a gigantic teak tree, and in its thick, shining, evergreen leaves, lay a huge boa, in an easy coil, taking his morning nap. Above him was a powerful ape, of the baboon species, a leering race of scamps, always bent on mischief. Now the ape, from his position, saw a crocodile in the water, rising to the top, exactly beneath the coil of the serpent. Quick as thought, he jumped plump upon the snake, which fell with a splash into the jaws of the crocodile. The ape saved himself by clinging to a limb of the tree, but a battle royal immediately commenced in the water. The serpent, grasped in the middle by the crocodile, made the waters boil by his furious contortions. Winding his folds round and round the body of his antagonist, he disabled his two hinder legs, and by his contractions made the scales of the monster crack. The water was speedily tinged with the blood of both combatants, yet neither was disposed to yield. They rolled over and over; neither being able to obtain a decided advantage. All this time, the cause of mischief was in a state of the highest ecstacy. He leaped up and down the branches of the tree, came several times close to the scene of the fight, shook the limbs of the tree, uttered a yell, and again frisked about. At the end of ten minutes a silence began to come over the scene. The folds of the serpent began to be relaxed, and though they were trembling along the back, the head hung liteless in the water. The crocodile was also still, and though only the spines of his back were visible, it was evident that he too was dead. The monkey now perched himself on the lower limbs of the tree, close to the dead bodies, and amused himself for ten minutes in making all sorts of faces at them. This seemed to be adding insult to injury. One of my companions was standing at a short distance, and taking a stone from the edge of the lake, hurled it at the ape. He was totally unprepared, and as it struck him on the side of the head, he was instantly toppled over and fell upon the crocodile. A few bounds, however, brought him ashore, and taking to the tree, he speedily disappeared among the thick branches.

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USEFUL KNOWLEDGE can have no enemies except the ignorant; it cherishes youth, delights the aged, is an ornament in prosperity, and yields comfort in adversity.

WIT AND WISDOM.

ORIGINAL AND SELECTED—PREPARED EXPRESSLY FOR THE LEDGER
BY GEO. D. PRENTICE.

THERE is a class of observers who never profit by their observation; whose wisdom is of the abstract kind that is never exhibited in action. Always in error, they are yet shrewd in detecting it; keenly alive to the ridiculous, they are yet always themselves ridiculous.

SEEM not ashamed of your business if it is an honest one. Better smell of the shop than cover yourself with odors and essences, which, half-disguising, render it disgusting.

A BANKRUPT walks the streets the day before his name is in the gazette with the same erect and confident brow as ever; he feels the mortification of his situation only after it becomes known to others.

THE present rage for book-making seems to point to a period when every man will have quite enough to do to read his own productions. Then, however, every writer will be sure to have an appreciative reader.

THE Ettrick Shepherd says that dogs are often fondest of bad men. The instinct of self-preservation would seem to teach them to be fondest of those that don't mince matters.

ELOQUENCE is never so great as when it pleads along with nature, and the culprit is a child strayed from his duty and returned to it again with tears.

THE qualities of your friends will be those of your enemies: cold friends, cold enemies; half-friends, half-enemies; fervid friends, fervid enemies.

WHERE there is a great amount of character, there will be a great amount of misunderstood action, commonly called eccentricity.

GOOD-NATURE is of daily use; but courage is at best but a holiday-kind of virtue, to be seldom exercised, and never but in cases of necessity.

HE who thinks he can do without others is mistaken; he who thinks others cannot do without him is still more mistaken.

LOVE'S sweetest meanings are unspoken. The full heart knows no rhetoric of words; it resorts to the pantomime of sighs and glances.

OF all monarchs, Nature is the most just in the enactment of laws and the most rigorous in punishing the violation of them.

DON'T be too anxious to avoid a difficulty. Look it sternly in the eye, and it may turn its abashed head away and avoid you.

AUTHORS are the creators or the creatures of opinion. The great make an epoch; the many reflect their age.

IT is justly said of woman, that she divides our sorrows and doubles our joys. Pity she quadruples our expenses.

A LADY must think she has something valuable in her head if we may judge from the number of locks she keeps upon it.

IF the use of words is to conceal ideas, some men have no need of words, for they have no ideas to conceal.

THE world is a large quagmire; we can keep ourself from sinking only by jumping nimbly from bog to bog.

SOMETIMES society gets tired of a man and hangs him. Sometimes a man gets tired of society and hangs himself.

A RICHLY-DRESSED dandy is like the Colchian ram with the golden wool—the fleece is worth more than the mutton.

"I WISH you would pay a little attention to me, wife." "Well, I am paying as little as I can."

SWINE are held by many in high esteem as food, but their hind parts are all gammon.

OFTENTIMES the person whose death is most deeply regretted by a man's second wife is his first.

THERE is no bigotry so blind as that which is founded on a supposed exemption from all prejudice.

FARMERS, like scurrilous editors, are workers in dirt, but, unlike them, are not dishonored by it.

CEREMONY is the invention of gentlemen to keep boors and fools at a distance.

WE occasionally hear of the arrest of a young woman for wearing a *coat of male.*

IF you marry a scolding woman, your children will be hot-house plants.

PRAY as if all your trust were in Providence, but work as if all your trust were in your hands.

SOME fellows never pay a debt except when they owe a grudge.

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CURRENT ITEMS.

A BURGLAR, while attempting to break into a gentleman's room in a hotel in New Orleans, one night not long ago, was shot, and severely wounded in the face, the ball tearing through his jaw and lodging in the base of the brain. Notwithstanding this, he made his way back to his room and a confederate, who fled on seeing the state of his wounded "pal." The burglar was tracked to his room by a trail of blood, and in it over $20,000 worth of plunder was found, $15,000 of which was identified the next day by parties from whom it had been stolen.

A FAMILY in Belgium was not long since observed to exhibit the striking peculiarity that every one of its females had six fingers and six toes on each foot, while the males had only the ordinary number; and on inquiry it was found that such had been the case through many generations, and at last a portrait of an ancestress of the family was found, that had been painted two centuries before, in which the same peculiarity, as to the hands, was exhibited.

A NUMBER of sailors, on a spree, got into a fight one night recently, in Cherry street, and one of them drawing a knife began to cut and thrust at his companions promiscuously, and wounded three of them badly, when he was himself stabbed in a dangerous and perhaps fatal manner.

A CONVICT in the Penitentiary at Washington, who had been sentenced to imprisonment for life as a punishment for murder, not liking the idea of so long a residence in such an abode, got a friend to furnish him with a strong cord, by the aid of which he scaled the walls and succeeded in making his escape.

A WEALTHY farmer, living in Tennessee, cut his hand a short time since, while he was engaged in salting pork, and did not pay much attention to the wound, as it seemed a mere trifle; but after a time it began to pain him severely, grew inflamed, spread up his arm, and finally occasioned his death by mortification.

A GERMAN, living in Detroit, who is said to have drunk a gallon of whiskey a day during the past year, and been in a state of intoxication all that time, was recently killed by drinking two quarts of cider. It is said that the foolish young man had spent $25,000 in his senseless debaucheries.

A COMPANY of vagabond boys, who went skating one Sunday recently, in the western part of this State, in attempting to rush all together over a thin section of the ice, broke through, and two of them were drowned while the others escaped only after a most desperate struggle.

A MAN threw himself under a train of cars near Painsville, O., a short time since, and was instantly killed, his body being cut and mangled in a most horrible manner; and in his pocket was found a letter addressed to a friend, in which he announced his intention to commit suicide in that way.

A FEMALE store-keeper in Salem, Mass., was unfairly dealt with recently by two young scamps, one of whom held the door so she could not give an alarm, while the other robbed her money-drawer of eight dollars, which was all the cash capital she had.

A GENTLEMAN named Bartlett was recently drowned by breaking through the ice of a small lake in Minnesota, that he was attempting to cross in a carriage and over which he had driven the day before with perfect safety.

A COUPLE of pugilists in St. Johns, N. B., while exhilarated by liquor, had a "set-to" one day not long since, and one received a "foul blow" which felled him senseless to the floor, from which he was taken up dead.

A RECENT report states that there are three hundred and fifty-two thousand horses in the State of Virginia, the estimated value of which is thirty-six millions of dollars.

A CORRESPONDENT writing from Utah, says that of the tenants of thirty-six graves in a village in the Washoe country, thirty-five came to their death by violence.

AN orphan pauper boy in an almshouse in New Hampshire, recently had a legacy of two thousand dollars left him by a relative in England.

NEW YORK LEDGER

ROBERT BONNER, Editor and Proprietor.

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A NEW STORY

BY

ANNA CORA RITCHIE.

In this number of the Ledger we commence a story entitled, "The Mute Singer," by the gifted authoress above-mentioned. The scene is laid in Paris, and ranges through all the contrasts of society so marked in that city, from the attics of poverty to the gilded mansions of millionaires and the renowned palaces of the realm. Sons and daughters of poverty and genius figure in the story, side by side with the sons and daughters of long-descended lines of noblemen and princes. The love of the poor but heaven-gifted heroine for the representative of a noble and time-honored family; the love of the nobleman for the poor child of genius; the envy and hatred of rich relatives of rank and their base plottings against the happiness of the lovers; the struggles of brave, honest hearts against aristocratic heartlessness and treachery, are wrought out with the power and pathos of a masterly mind and hand. We shall be much mistaken, if "The Mute Singer" does not meet with the enthusiastic appreciation of our myriad readers.

* * *

A MISGOVERNED CITY—WHAT ARE WE COMING TO?

If there is a city in Christendom that pays as roundly as New York for being misgoverned, the fact has not transpired through the press. Our expenditure of ten millions a year is equivalent to an average assessment of more than ten dollars per head upon all the men, women and infants within the city limits. The sum total exceeds the combined revenues of *twenty-eight states of the Union! And what have we to show for it? We are sold to those modern Philistines*, the contractors, to whom is granted by our *sworn guardians and protectors*, the privilege of depriving us of what we pay for at most extortionate rates. For the item of public cleanliness we are charged over three hundred thousand dollars per annum. Look at our streets. Any man who believes they could not be kept in better condition than at present for half that amount, is a fit candidate for a lunatic asylum. The obstruction of the public thoroughfares by individuals for their own private purposes is a finable offence, and yet nuisances of various kinds, some of them dangerous, all of them annoying and disgraceful, confront us in every highway and byway. Public property is siezed and held by wealthy monopolists in defiance of law, and some of the means of egress from our island metropolis are under the control of favored speculators, who consult their own convenience and not ours in transporting us from shore to shore. Licensed pirates flaunt their red flags in the face of Justice, and fleece the unwary in broad daylight and with open doors, with entire impunity, and poison-mongers, licensed and unlicensed, sell their soul and body destroying compounds to children of both sexes without let or hindrance. Roguery, drunkenness and debauchery are negatively if not positively encouraged by men in office, who open their pockets and shut their eyes whenever a question is to be decided between *right* and *rhino*. These are hard things to say of the trustees of the public interests, but they are a part of our current history, and though we utter them with shame and sorrow, the only hope of a beneficial change lies in giving them a wide publicity and denouncing them before the world. More than twenty years ago, an honest Aldermanic committee reported that "corruption pervaded our municipal government, from the constable on his beat to the magistrate on the bench." Have the morals of Authority improved since then? Quite the reverse.

If our municipal rulers, (it is all humbug to call them "public servants," for they use us as they please,) while they put one-fourth of the city revenue into their own pockets, employed the remainder wisely and well in the public service, it would be something in their favor. But they do not condescend to do this. On the contrary, they neglect and fleece us at the same time. As a general thing, their public policy, even when disinterested, is as unsatisfactory as their official morality. To all these strictures there are of course honorable exceptions, but they constitute the minority—*and the majority governs*.

Our wealthy owners of real estate complain of the burdensome city taxes. They *groan* but they do not *act*. Our elections go by default; the most responsible offices pass into the hands of untrustworthy men, mainly because these rich grumblers do not choose to soil their broadcloth by rubbing shoulders with rowdyism and loaferism in primary meetings and conventions. As a body they take no active part in nominating or supporting eligible candidates for the most important local posts in the gift of the people. Nor does the weight of our onerous taxation fall ultimately upon these easy going Crœsuses. To suppose so is a great mistake. They shift the burden to other shoulders, by proportioning their *rent rolls* to their *tax bills*. The tenant interest, not the landlord interest, is the Atlas upon whose back the crushing load is imposed. The world of labor pays a large proportion of our annual taxes in the prices of all articles sold under rented roofs; and thus the main heft of the burden is borne by those least able to sustain it.

HUMBUG AS A FINE ART.

Immense progress has been made, during the last dozen years, in the art of cajolery. Formerly the green and succulent members of society were the principal prey of charlatans whose cunning and assurance constituted their entire stock in trade. But in these days of cultivation and refinement, humbug seems to have attained the rank of a fine art. Some of its practitioners are men of high position, of considerable talent, and of liberal education, and they operate not upon the ignorant merely, but also upon a class on the same social level with themselves. The finer touches of the art are occasionally discernable in quarters where one would hope to find honesty if anywhere on earth. The truth, the whole truth, pure and simple, is a rare commodity and seems to be getting scarcer day by day. In fact, the public taste has become so vitiated by palatable plausibilities, that nine tenths of us are apt to make a wry face when the truth is administered to us raw. Fibs come to us in so many queer shapes, that the father of them all, would scarcely know some of his own offspring. Occasionally they take the guise of rough and rude candor, and sometimes they are polished and ornate to the last degree. Yes, in these latter days, Humbug is, literally, all things to all men. It takes the role of patriot, philanthropist, moralist, preacher, hero, philosopher, artist, critic, with equal facility, and the counterfeits are so passable that they often deceive the wisest of us, while whole communities "are as tenderly led by the nose as asses are." Something of the nature of Ithuriel's spear, that turned Beelzebub out of all his disguises, and showed him up in his true shape, whenever it touched him, would be invaluable in these days. We would like to have the control of such an instrument for a month or so, and to make a tour of the places where "cunningly devised fables" pass current for facts, with it in our hand. What monsters might be plucked out of their moral livery with such a goad!

* * *

JOHN CASSELL ON "HOTEL LIFE," AND ITS MORAL EFFECT ON AMERICAN WOMEN.

John Cassell, Esq., the great London publisher, since his return to England, has been writing a series of articles for his *Family Paper*, entitled "America as it is." From one of these articles we quote the following paragraph on Hotel Life in this country:

> "If the question be put to me, What is your opinion as to the influence of hotel life upon the American character? my reply would be, that I consider that influence to be very unfavorable, especially in the case of the women and children. In American hotels there are families who engage private rooms, and mingle but little with the other guests; these, however, are the exceptions. As a general rule, the privacy of home life, which tends so greatly to strengthen family ties, and to guard domestic virtues, is destroyed by the system of living in hotels. The Americans with whom I conversed on the subject bore unanimous testimony to the evils arising from this mode of life, and affirmed that the domestic troubles which so frequently occupy the American Divorce Courts, may in many cases be traced to the influence of promiscuous society at hotels and boarding-houses. Nor will this be wondered at if we consider the position of a young wife at an American hotel. Her husband is absent many hours each day at his business, and during those hours she has little to occupy her mind or heart, much less her hands. She gossips a little, and goes shopping a little, and reads a little; she receives visits and pays visits; criticises her neighbors, and undergoes their criticism; but, after all, the time passes heavily, and she is apt to feel that weariness of spirit which inevitably results from idleness, and which the French call *ennui*. She seeks relief, perhaps, in the society of strangers, and thus, never dreaming of harm, she finds herself surrounded by perils, from which her firmness of principle may be insufficient to protect her."

There is unquestionably much truth in this statement,—indeed, we know that our friend Cassell had an excellent opportunity, while stopping at the "Fifth Avenue" in this city, to study the subject on which he writes; but we submit that it is hardly fair for one who has enjoyed, in an eminent degree, the agreeable advantages to which Mr. Cassell refers, to be the very first to complain of the system to which he is indebted for many pleasant hours while sojourning here. It is well known that Mr. Cassell was a general favorite with the ladies at the Fifth Avenue Hotel. On the morning of the day on which he sailed for England, we breakfasted with him at that house; and although we were both desirous of talking over matters connected with the publishing business, in this country and in England, we were constantly interrupted by beautiful and accomplished ladies, who came to bid him good-bye, express their regret at his departure, etc., etc.; indeed, one young lady—apparently not over eighteen, and exceedingly amiable and fascinating—left her own party at the opposite table, and took possession of a seat at Mr. C.'s elbow in such a graceful and easy manner that—now we come to look back at it—we do not wonder that hotel-life in this country made a lasting impression on Mr. Cassell's mind.

* * *

ROADS TO RUIN.

It is the easiest thing in the world to find one of these roads, for they run in all directions over the social plane. They present, as the advertisements have it, "a wide field for choice." They comprise highways and bye-ways, roundabout roads and cuts across lots, smooth paths and rough paths, ascents and descents; and as they intersect each other at points innumerable, travellers to the common terminus can turn out of the road they have started on into a new one, at their pleasure. The outfit for the journey, be it long or short, is not of much consequence, since destitution and despair await all who persist in pursuing it. Some set out with pockets full of gold; others with their pockets empty, hoping to fill them by the way. To some the Fiend Speculation plays the Cicerone, marshalling them to seeming Dorados in the distance, that melt into moonshine as they travel on. The Will-o'-the-wisp, Gambling, with his pasteboard signals, beguiles others to the brinks of precipices, whence they tumble headlong into irremediable shame. The Goblin Rum, heads a caravan of self-destructionists whose name is legion.

All "easily besetting sins" pull *one way*, and betray their victims into one or other of the many roads to ruin. The only trustworthy safeguard against their enticements is resistance at the outset. When morbid appetite or inclination pulls ruin-ward, brace the moral system against it; pit manhood against temptation; ask help from Heaven. Christian obstinacy is more than a match for Satan and all his agents. Misfortune may overtake any man, but misfortune is not ruin. In that terrible word, in its true interpretation, is involved loss of character, of self-respect, of moral courage, of all that renders life valuable. Beware of the first step leading to such a consummation!

* * *

THE "RED DEVILS" VS. THE CELESTIALS.

Pekin is in the hands of the "outside barbarians," and the French and English forces are having a good time, no doubt, with the cramp-footed, pig-eyed belles of the celestial city. They have the fun pretty much to themselves; his imperial majesty, the Brother of the Sun, with his Tartar army, having left the capital after making an involuntary present of his palace filled with oriental valuables to the "red devils," as the invaders are politely termed in the Chinese manifestoes.

UNRECOGNISED HEROISM.

A plaid shawl, a dark stuff-dress, and a plain straw bonnet. A gentle face, with dark circles about the eyes, and cheeks prematurely sunken. This was the vision I saw, at an hour when only sonorous and inexorable milk-men disturb the morning nap of last night's pleasure seekers. That was all *you* would have noticed as you went your way, nor turned again to look at her, with the magnetism with which beautiful features and graceful motion compel the eye, whether we will or no. *I* saw a halo about her head, and the plain garments she wore were lustrous with the light of heroic deeds. A life of toil and no hope of rest. A lonely heart with all its womanly yearnings unspoken. The broad blue ocean between her and the land of her birth, over which nearly every penny, coined from the mind of unremitting labor, went freighted with filial love to the palsied hands of the infirm old mother, whose last days were gliding so peacefully away, and on whom those gentle eyes had looked their last. For some day, a letter with a black seal would come, to her whose youth and beauty were fading—who went to sleep every night with a sigh, and turned heart-sick away from the golden light of morning; whose long, long days and lonely evenings were passed in the monotony of that life which knows neither youth nor the love for which it hungers.

"Curse God and die!" was voiced by a *man*. Sometimes woman, in her rash despair, echoes it. But who shall count the great army, of whom this heroic girl is but one, who dutifully toil for absent kindred, turning a deaf ear to every suggestion of self-interest, every syren voice, that would flood *one* day with sunshine, to darken a whole life.

As I looked at this girl, and remembered the thread-bare plaint of the young men of the present day who "would be so glad to be married were not the women so extravagant, and could they *only* afford it," I asked myself, why do these young men of small pecuniary expectations persist in looking for wives *only* among showy, extravagant women whose frivolity they condemn, in the same breath with which they tacitly admit that there is no choice but a marriage with such, or celibacy. Why not, in the face of a custom-ridden world, marry an intelligent, brave girl, like the one of whom I have spoken,—whose natural refinement would put to shame the meretricious drawing-room graces, too often veneered over a coarse-grained nature.

Fanny Fern

* * *

WOMAN'S DRESS AND HEALTH.

Mr. Bonner.—*Dear Sir*:—In the Ledger of Jan. 5th I notice a very sensible inquiry, which, as I would like to reply to it, I cannot do better than to quote entire:

> "We wonder if our ladies are aware how injurious is the practice, so general, of crossing their hands and arms over their waists as they walk? Do they know that it contracts the chest, and prevents that free circulation which is so desirable to the blood? Do they know that their fingers, in winter would not become 'numb,' if allowed to hang by the side, or if the arm swung gently in walking, as does a man's?"

In the first place, it is a universal custom for ladies to wear shawls, cloaks, or mantillas of so loose and flowing a style that they become at once ungraceful and uncomfortable unless the hands *are* crossed over the waist. It has also been, from time to time, and I believe is now, the fashion to carry muffs, which, every one knows cannot be done without bending the arms at right angles. Besides these, it would be next to impossible for a lady to walk, especially in the country, and allow her arms to hang by her side, or swing gently, so long as fashion compels her to wear trailing skirts; as one or both of her hands are continually put in requisition to keep her clothing from the filth of the street.

At first thought it does not seem like a very difficult matter to do away with these evils that are contracting the chests, paling the cheeks, and enfeebling the step of nearly all American women. But so sure as a woman, or body of women, attempt to adopt a style of dress combining healthfulness, convenience, and beauty, if it is at variance with the prevailing fashion, they at once become objects of ridicule and scorn, not only to their own sex, but to men—men who are continually bewailing their feebleness, and their inefficiency to perform their part in the great life work of human beings. Then what shall be done? Men must either advise and encourage women to let common-sense instead of fashion guide them in their style of dress, or be content to see their wives and daughters fade and grow old while in the spring-time of life. Though it is a great wrong to woman, to deprive her of the free use of her limbs and muscles—to deprive her of health, and consequent happiness, for the sake of having her follow a senseless fashion.

Will not those who have felt, and those who have witnessed the blight that comes from this growing feebleness of American women, give a thought to this matter? and where it is evident that the present style of dress has something to do with this deplorable state of things, will they not help do away with the evil, by encouraging women to dress healthfully and consistently in spite of fashion?

R. M. R.

* * *

THE SEAT OF THE AFFECTIONS.

It has been well suggested that there is no authority in history, mythology, metaphysics or physiology, for placing the headquarters of Cupid in the heart. The cradle of that baby god may, for aught we know to the contrary, be in the lungs, or the spleen, or the liver. One of our Homeopathists says that Love is a creature of the stomach, and depends upon the gastric juices for support. Perhaps he is right. In fact, there is a good deal of plausibility in the theory. And yet if a lover should say to the object of his affections, "Miss, permit me to lay my stomach and fortune at your feet," she would think it an odd way of popping the question. Conventialities without any foundation have sometimes the force of facts; and that important and powerful muscle which acts as the vital pump and distributing reservoir of the system, having been assigned to Cupid as his residence, from time immemorial, we must assume him to be there, although no trace of him can be found on dissection. It is, however, a palpable absurdity to represent the hearts of lovers as in flames or transpierced with barbed arrows, because it is manifest that a person with the vital organ in a state of combustion or on a skewer, would be at the point of death, and therefore incapable of courting. And yet, if this popular fiction be discarded, what becomes of the valentine trade?

* * *

THE DIVORCE MANIA.

There seems to be a mania on the question of divorce, raging in this country and in England. The courts are fairly overrun with applicants for a dissolution of the marriage bond; and the tendency of legislation is to render the severance of the tie more and more easy. We suppose there is no help for this state of things; the mania must have its "run," like the cholera, or any other virulent disease. But it is to be hoped that, like other scourges, the divorce epidemic will finally use itself up, or run itself so far into the ground that it can never be resurrected.

* * *

Small and steady gains give competency with tranquillity of mind.

A STRANGE NARRATIVE.

Plainfield, New Jersey, *Dec.* 26, 1860.

Mr. Bonner:—*Dear Sir*—In your answer to one of your correspondents, in the Ledger, on the subject of restoration to life of a person after being executed, you manifest a disbelief of the fact, or of a case in point. If so, what do you think of the following narrative, which, as you will observe from the print, I have clipped out of the *Farmers' Magazine*.

P. L. M.

[From the Vermont Journal of Nov. 4, 1789.]

REVIVIFICATION OF JOSEPH TAYLOR.

A remarkable and extraordinary narrative of the revivification of young Joseph Taylor, who was supposed to have been hanged to death, (in company with that notorious highwayman, pickpocket and housebreaker, Archibald Taylor,) on Boston Neck, on Thursday, the 8th of May, 1788, *for a violent assault and robbery on the highway, committed on the person and property of Mr. Nathaniel Cunningham, butcher, in October*, 1787.

In a letter from said Joseph Taylor to his kind friend and countryman, Mr. Phelim Donance, in Boston.

Egg Harbor, mouth of the Delaware,
May 12, 1789.

My Dear Friend—You will, no doubt, be greatly astonished at receiving a letter from one whom you so lately saw, to all appearance, numbered with the dead, with all the ignominy of a public and shameful execution. But tho' strange as it may appear, it is no less strange than true, that, blessed be God for his infinite goodness, I am now among the living to praise him. It was my fervent desire that you should have been made acquainted with the steps which were taken to recover me to life immediately after my being hanged. But the doctor who managed the affair would not admit of more than five persons in the secret, as he feared a discovery, and said a crowd around me would be fatal, and prevent the air getting into my lungs, and O'Donnell and Tector had been told of it before I saw you, and they, with the doctor, his young man, and a person he brought with him, made the five. I therefore take this early opportunity to let you know of my being alive, and in health, blessed be God, as I hope that these lines will find you, as also the circumstances which attend my execution and recovery to life; as also my present frame of mind and resolution, through the grace of God, to sin no more, but endeavor after new obedience.

You remember that you, among other friends, had great hopes of my being pardoned on account of my youth; but when their honors sat, I soon found I must be made an example of, as they were determined never to pardon highwaymen. I then began to prepare for death, but must needs say, though I had many affecting conferences with the reverend parsons who visited me in gaol, I never, even after my condemnation, realized that I was suddenly to die in so awful a manner, until a gentleman, who I afterwards found was a doctor, came and talked privately with the late unhappy sufferer, and my fellow convict, Archibald Taylor, who, when the gentleman was gone, came to me with money in his hand, and so smiling a countenance, that I thought he had received it in charity. But he soon undeceived me, telling me with an air of gaiety, that it was the price of his body, and then added a shocking speech, which I sincerely hope is blotted out of the book of God's remembrance against his poor soul.

This was the first time since my condemnation that I thought what it was to die. The shock was terrible, and Taylor increased it, saying that the doctor had desired him to bargain with me for my body also. The tho'ts of my bones not being permitted to remain in the grave in peace, and my body, which my poor mother had so often caressed and dandled on her knee, and which had been so pampered by my friends in my better days, being slashed and mangled by the doctors, was too much for me. I had been deaf to the pious exhortations of the priests, but now my conscience was awakened, and hell seemed indeed to yawn for me.

What a night of horror was the next night! When the doctor came in the morning to bargain for my body, I was in a cold sweat; my knees smote together, and my tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of my mouth. He perceived the agony of my soul, and asked me some questions of the state of my mind. I found utterance, and poured out my heart to him. He seemed affected at my distress, especially as my conduct was so different from that of A. Taylor's; and after pausing, he left me without mentioning the sale of my body, and said he would call again the next day. He came and asked me privately whether I had two or three friends I could depend upon to assist in anything for my benefit. He communicated his design of attempting to recover me to life if my body could be carried, immediately after I was cut down, to some convenient place, out of the reach of the people, assuring me by all that was sacred, that if he failed in his attempt he would give my body a Christian burial. I closed with it without hesitation. The doctor then left me, and soon after Tector and O'Donnell came to see me, to whom I communicated the plan in confidence. The doctor came back to charge me not to trust more persons than were sufficient to carry my body from the gallows to the place provided. I told him who the persons with me were; and upon O'Donnell's engaging to procure a number of his countrymen to remove my body to a private place, who were not to be let into the secret, but suppose it was to secure my body from the doctors, he seemed pleased with the plan, and made us promise to admit no more persons into the secret, upon pain of his not having to do in the affair so soon as it should be discovered. He gave them money to hire a small boat to be in readiness at the wharf, nearest to the place of execution, which boat I think was hired of one Mr. Skinner or Skillings, near Oliver's dock. The doctor undertook to find the place of execution, which was then reported to be in several places, and to procure a two mast boat with a good cuddy, which was to be moored off the wharf at a convenient distance, all which was accordingly done. The two mast boat in which was the doctor, his friend and apprentice, with their doctor's instruments, was moored up the bay, near the gallows, the morning of the execution day, but fell down with the tide, about two hours before the execution, towards Dorchester Point, for fear of being grounded.

The state of my mind, after my conversation with the doctor until the day of execution, it is impossible for me to describe. This glimpse of hope—this mere chance of escaping the jaws of death, and of avoiding the eyes of an offended Judge, at whose bar I was noways prepared to appear, seemed but to render my mind more distracted. I sometimes indulged myself with the thoughts of being recovered to life; and as I had fortunately concealed my real name, that I might return, like the Prodigal, to my parents, and live a life devoted to God and their comfort. But I oftener feared the means might fail to bring me to life, and then I wished that this scheme had never been mentioned, as the hopes of life seemed to prevent my conversion, and then, to be surprised into another world, totally unprepared, how terrible! Thus distracted, the time flew, and the awful day arrived. In the morning the reverend parsons visited me. I was much softened by their conversation, and really, at that time, wished I had never seen the doctor, but by the near and certain approach of death, had been prepared to live in those blissful mansions which are prepared in the world of glory for the truly penitent.

Soon after they left us, the doctor's young man came (under pretence of a message from Mrs. Ranger, who had shown me much kindness in gaol, the Lord reward her for it) to renew the doctor's directions how to conduct my body so as not to suffer the least shock. He left me the following paper.

> Thursday Morning, *May* 8th, 1789.
>
> "Taylor, everything depends on your presence of mind. Remember that the human machine may be put in tune again if you preserve the spinal muscle from injury, and do not dislocate the vertebræ of the neck; as the colli spinalis is deduced from the transverse processes of the vertebræ of the throat, and is latterly inserted into the vertebræ of the neck, its connection with the whole human frame is material; so that you must endeavor to work the knot behind your neck, and press your throat upon the halter, which will prevent the neck's breaking, and likewise the compressions of the jugular, and preserve the circulations in some degree. *Keep up your spirits.*"

My hopes were now raised, and my former terror did not return upon me; which I doubt not was observed by the reverend parson who attended me, by the officers of justice, and the multitude, who doubtless compared my behavior with that of my fellow-sufferer. It is true, when I mounted the stage, I dreaded the pain of hanging as I should any other bodily pain, equally severe; but the far greater distress of meeting an offended, inexorable Judge, and being consigned to endless misery, was done away. For the nearer the time of execution approached, the more my reliance on the doctor increased.

You was present at the solemn parting with, and warning which was given to the people—at the excellent prayer of the Rev. Mr. Stilman, and the dropping of the traps, which to all appearance launched me and my poor, unhappy fellow-prisoner, Archibald Taylor, into a *boundless eternity*.

But to return to my particular feelings—I preserved my presence of mind; and when the halter was fastened, remembered the doctor's directions, and while the prayer was making I kept gently turning my head so as to bring the knot on the back of my neck, nearly, as O'Donnell afterwards informed, and as you and others observed. When the trap fell I had all my senses about me; and though I have no remembrance of hearing any sounds among the people, yet I believe I did not lose my senses till some minutes after. My first feelings after the shock of falling was a violent strangling and oppression for want of breath; this soon gave way to a pain in my eyes, which seemed to be burned by two balls of fire which appeared before them, which seemed to dart on and off like lightning; settling ever and anon upon my shoulders as if they weighed ten hundred tons; and after one terrible flash, in which the two balls seemed to join in one, I sunk away without pain, like one falling to sleep.

What followed after I was turned off you know, as I was informed you kindly assisted my other friends in taking the body down as soon as you were permitted, and conveying it across the salt works to the small boat; I was from thence carried on board the two-mast boat to the doctor, to all appearance dead; for O'Donnell, who was directed by the doctor to cut and loosen my clothes, and rub me, throwing water on me, could perceive no life in me, but told the doctor it was too late. But the doctor was not discouraged; and in one hour and twenty two minutes after I was brought on board the boat, making two hours and forty-three minutes after I was turned off, he perceived signs of life in me, by a small motion and warmth in my bosom. In twenty minutes after I gave a violent, deep groan. Here description fails! I cannot describe the intolerable agony of that moment. Ten thousand stranglings are trifling to it! The first confused thoughts I had were, that it was the moment of my dissolution; for I had no knowledge of my removal from the gallows, but was quite insensible from the time I first lost myself to that in which I recovered—except some faint glimmerings of a scene, which, faint and confused as they were, I shall never forget, but which I feel impressed upon my heart I ought to communicate *to no man living*. I was soon after this violent anguish made sensible where I was; the doctor's stuff, and sight of my friends, restored me in a great measure to my senses. The doctor would not allow me to talk much; but feeling fatigued, he permitted me to lie down, having two persons by me to rub me with a brush while I slept. When I awoke it was dark. I felt somewhat light-headed and confused from the dreadful scene I had passed through. All hands were now called, and a solemn oath was taken by all present, not to tell anything which had happened until they should know that I was safe out of the country; and then not to discover the doctor, his friend, or apprentice. I was then put on shore, and went from thence on board the vessel which brought me here.

I am engaged to go to Gottenburgh, in Sweden; and shall sail to-morrow in a ship which is coming down the river from Philadelphia. I shall take my family name, and return to my parents *a Prodigal Son indeed*. God grant, as I have severely eaten husks, that I may soon eat bread in my earthly parents' house; and be prepared for such *bread as the saints in glory love, and such as angels eat, in that house which is not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*.

I remain your assured friend, until death shall indeed come,

Joseph Taylor.

* * *

INTERESTED POLITENESS.

One bright day recently, when the ladies were out in angelic flocks, a fine-looking man, whom unsophisticated eyes might have looked upon as a policeman, "might have been seen" at various points on Broadway politely aiding the fair promenaders to cross that thronged thoroughfare. He frequently changed his place of operation, and after a short but active campaign, suddenly disappeared altogether, and could nowhere be found, although the police aided diligently in his search. This mysterious disappearance of their handsome and polite cavalier, has ever since been a source of much annoyance to the ladies who shared in his attentions, inasmuch as they firmly believe that he might give them valuable information as to the whereabouts of the watches and purses which they lost on that memorable day.

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☞ Col. Seaver writes as follows to the *Philadelphia Press*:

> "I have this moment been reading Mr. Bonner's programme for 1861, and it is really something the like of which cannot be found in any other paper 'Among our contributors,' says he, 'will be Edward Everett, George Bancroft, William Cullen Bryant'—the first rhetorician, the first historian, and the first poet of the country! Next come John G. Saxe, George P. Morris, N. P. Willis, Mrs. Sigourney, Alice Cary, Phœbe Cary, Mary Forrest, Fanny Fern, all of whom stand in the front rank of writers, and after them a host of literary celebrities, either of whom would, as 'sole contributor,' make the fortune of a country paper. And then what a lot of incog. writers the man has! Is it any wonder that when a man of the energy and vim of Bonner can gather into his columns the brain-work of America's very best writers, that he should print Ledgers by the hundred thousand, and be as prosperous now (in these dull times) as at any previous period in his history?"

* * *

To believe good and to do good, truly and trustfully, is the healthiest of humanity's conditions.

SONG: THE WINTER ROSE.

BY WILLIAM ROSS WALLACE.

I.

Dark Winter leans from yonder crag,
  With flags of cloud unfurled;
His great black trumpet of the storm
  Shakes the bleak world:
All leafless groan the shuddering trees;
  And sob the dreary Hours,
Like childless mothers in their wo,
  Mid these reft bowers.

II.

Yet I have found a rose for thee,
  A solitary rose,
That struggled for its gentle life
  At Autumn's shadowy close.
O, dearest, take the tender one;
  Press it to thy sweet lips—
For Nature something lovely keeps
  Even in eclipse.

III.

So in the spirit's darkest wreck,
  Some feeling will remain
To show that hope is throbbing still
  Beneath misfortune's chain.
And, dearest, thus though ruin took
  My soul's own inmost shrine,
The rose of love would wreathe it yet
  For Aveline!

MOSES ORAN;

OR,

"THE BURGLARS' NEST."

BY GEO. CLARENCE BLANCHARD.

CHAPTER X.

AN UNPLEASANT ANNOUNCEMENT.

All rose in dismay. Mr. Van Cleeker had fallen from his chair in a fainting fit. Mrs. Platt wrung her hands, Mr. Pump stared in stupid astonishment, and Fanny rushed wildly towards him.

Mr. Tarleton, without waiting to get his hat, ran out for a physician. When he returned with Dr. Merton, the old gentleman was partially restored, and lying on the sofa, his daughter standing by, tenderly chafing his temples with spirits and water.

Tarleton felt repaid by the grateful look the young lady gave him when he entered, for all the trouble he had taken that afternoon to win her confidence. One single act of apparent kindness had done more for Mr. Job Tarleton than all his finesse. Feeling is not a common trait, it is so rare. We love and admire it in others, especially when we possess it ourselves. Fanny could not help observing that Mr. Tarleton, in performing a mere act of courtesy, had nevertheless displayed an uncommon degree of sympathy for her father—more, certainly, than she supposed him capable of showing. It looked natural and spontaneous, and she mentally resolved, as much as she disliked the man, to treat him better.

How the arch deceiver would have laughed in his sleeve to have known her thoughts, inasmuch as all the while he had been hunting up Dr. Merton, he was inwardly cursing what he considered the most unlucky of accidents. He, however, felt some consolation in seeing at least that he had created a favorable impression. He imagined he could wind the young lady round his finger, and he was impatient to show off his powers of fascination.

Dr. Merton administered the proper restoratives; Mr. Van Cleeker was conveyed to his chamber, and Tarleton and his partner, with many hypocritical expressions of sympathy, took their leave.

Fanny, glad to be released from their disagreeable society, followed Doctor Merton up stairs. She gently bent over her father's couch, and affectionately smoothed his hair; he was quietly sleeping.

"Is this attack anything serious, Doctor?" inquired she.

"Not in the least," replid Dr. Merton, decisively. "I suspect it proceeded from a little extraneous excitement, in no way related to his old complaint. His pulse, I see, beats quite regularly, with some little perceptible variation natural to the occasion. Has your father lately burdened his mind with anything particular?"

"Yes, sir; that is—I think"—hesitated the little maiden, for she dared not say half what she thought; "I think, Doctor, he has allowed himself to become so much excited about business affairs. Almost every evening Mr. Tarleton has been here, and——"

"Money matters, I suppose," interrupted Dr. Merton, with a thoughtful shake of his head. "These times are too exciting for his weak nerves. He must have quiet and rest. I must now go."

The physician dotted down a prescription, and with a few additional directions took his departure.

How anxiously and tenderly the little heiress of the Van Cleeker house watched over her slumbering parent. What devotion sparkled in those black eyes, and softened even the haughty outlines of her beautiful features. Mr. Job Tarleton was forgotten; all the world was forgotten save him.

They say that affection is selfish, but we believe it not. Sentiment may be selfish, passion may be selfish, but the pure ethereal flame is from on high. "It is an attribute of God himself;" a ray of His divine spirit electrifying our hearts; a golden chain that stretches from earth to Heaven, linking our souls with loved forms whose mortal images have forever passed away.

There was something remarkable in seeing a girl so young, so beautiful and blithe as Fanny, so self-denying and uncomplaining. For weeks she had watched over her father, and nursed him in his peevish sickness, foregoing all pleasures, denying herself even the gratification of society; cheerful and happy as though the dull room and silent house and misanthropic company made up a very Paradise indeed.

The old gentleman awoke, and partially raised himself from his couch. The cheerful blaze from the old-fashioned wood fire fell on the peerless form of his youthful daughter, as she stood regarding him with anxious solicitude. He earnestly met her gaze, as though striving to force down some powerful emotion, then impulsively covered his face and groaned aloud.

"My dear papa!" exclaimed Fanny, in alarm. She was about to call her aunt, but he gently detained her.

"And you still here," he said, with an affectionate glow on his pale cheek. "Ah! how little do I deserve such earnest and unfaltering devotion. My dear child, I know I am but selfish—you think me——"

"Papa," interrupted Fanny, "why talk thus? I never thought of such a thing. You must not speak another word. I see you already look excited."

"Fanny," replied he, calmly and seriously, "you are but a child, and can hardly understand my feelings. Mine is no bodily ailment, but something deeper. Here,"—he pressed his hand on his breast as he spoke—"here lies the foundation of all maladies, and still I almost think you have traced it, too. Is it not so?" he added, looking steadfastly in her face.

She looked down and hesitated. She thought of all that had occurred—of her own suspicions—and now they were all confirmed. Slowly she lifted up her pensive eyes, and her father read in them a silent answer.

"I thought so," he said, struggling to conquer his emotions, "and I am but wronging you to withhold it longer. It will have to be told, and why should I hesitate? Days, and weeks, and months might pass, yet it must come. And now, my daughter, let me ask you, have you ever, in your girlish fancy, formed an attachment?"

"*Never!*" replied the little maiden, and her pretty teeth closed tightly over the word.

"I am satisfied." Mr. Van Cleeker breathed easier. "You are not too young to receive impressions, and I feared you had. My daughter, though I know your heart is free, yet I am loth to reveal a secret—a secret that should have been opened to you before, but I could not say it. At an early age you were affianced, without your knowledge, to a friend of mine."

"And that friend?" murmured Fanny.

"Is *Mr. Tarleton.*"

If a thunderbolt had struck the young lady, it could have hardly produced a more bewildering effect. Her brain whirled; she tottered and would have fallen, but Mr. Van Cleeker caught her.

"Oh, my father!"

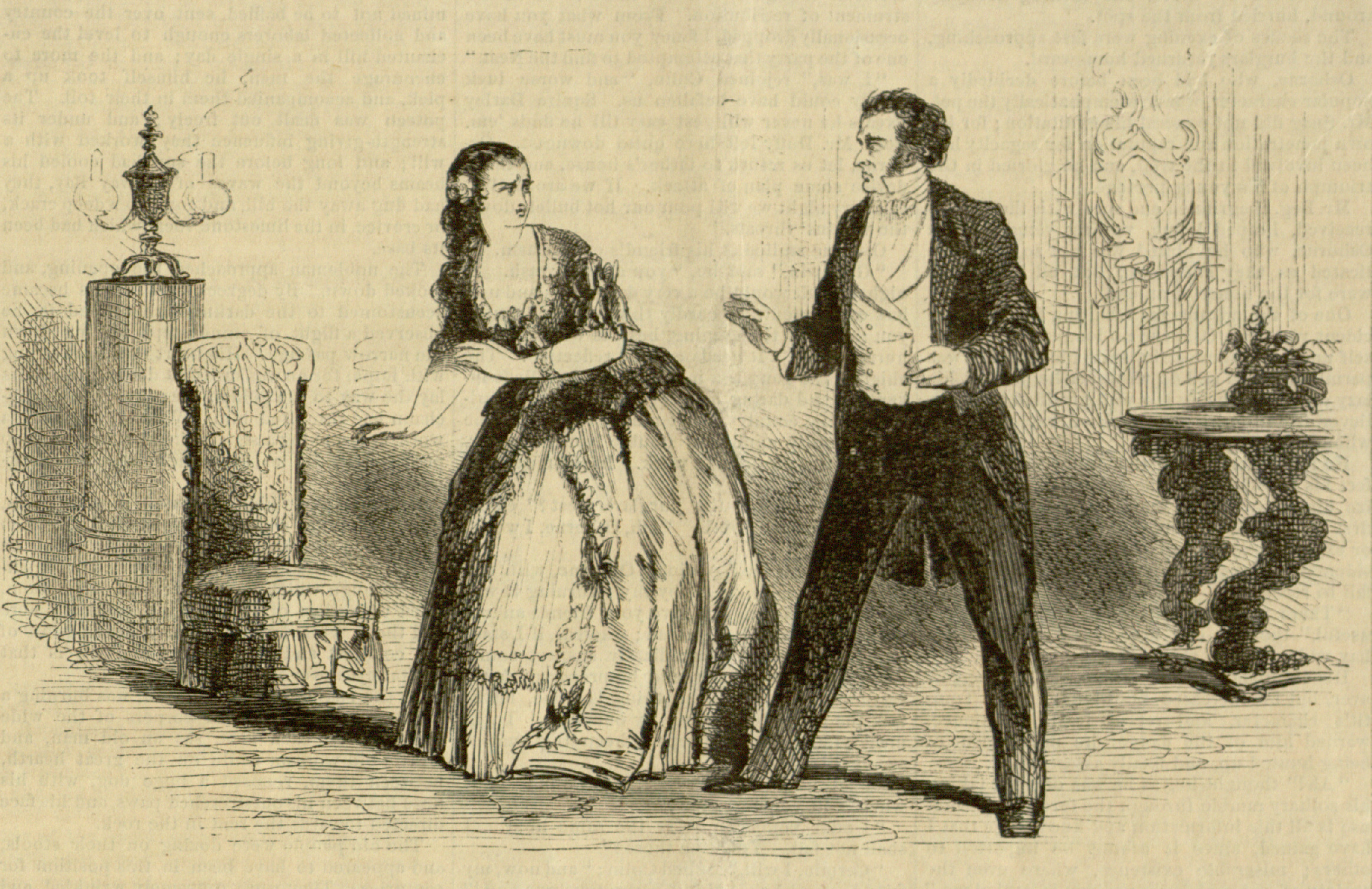
"Alas! my poor daughter," replied he, sorrowfully, "I feared it would overcome you. Be calm and listen. Mr. Tarleton, who, as you know, is my lawyer and business agent, is also an old friend. I owe him many obligations, for but for him this mansion would now be in other hands. He is much older than you, but age makes little difference where hearts agree. However painful this may now seem to you, my daughter, when you know him more you will be reconciled. What do you think of him, my dear?"

He asked the question as many do, in the very desperation of hoping against hope.

She did not answer, but with her eyes half averted, stood trembling before him.

He repeated the question.

"I hardly know," she murmured, "I've seen him so little. He is a good man, but——"



AN UNSUCCESSFUL WOOER.

"So he is," interrupted Mr. Van Cleeker, catching at a straw; "so he is a good man—a very excellent man; my dear, when you see him more you will love him. But did you intend to say something?"

"Dear papa," replied she, lifting her eyes imploringly to his, "do not ask; oh, give me time to think of all this dreadful news. Why was it kept from me? why was I permitted to go on, day by day, dreaming that I was free, rejoicing in the sunshine of happiness, only to have it snatched from me now?"

"My poor child," replied Mr. Van Cleeker, "you take this too much to heart. Perhaps I have done wrong in keeping it so long from you." He paused and clasped his hands over his eyes, as though some painful truth had flashed across his mind. If his daughter could have seen his face at that instant, she might have detected an almost guilty expression.

After a short silence he resumed:

"But surely you are not prejudiced against Mr. Tarleton?"

"Papa," she returned, half mournfully, "I am not prejudiced. He seems and does appear to have a good heart. I would not wrong him by my hasty judgment, but I never thought—I never dreamed—" She hesitated and colored deeply, for she felt she was betraying herself.

"Fanny," returned Mr. Van Cleeker, gravely, "it would be foolish in me to expect that you could love a man whom you have hardly seen; but on the same principle, I cannot see why you should dislike him. Divesting your mind of every personal prejudice, give, my daughter, this subject your most earnest, careful consideration. Think that your father has pledged his word; think of the gratitude, the joy he would feel to find you the same obedient, affectionate daughter you have always been to him."

He watched her as he said this, long and anxiously.

She made no reply; her heart was too full. Ah! what a struggle was going on within that little breast! Could she have expressed her feelings at the moment, it would have been humble, confiding filial obedience. Her love for her father was so steadfast and so true, that she had foregone all pleasures to watch and nurse him in the hour of sickness. She was ready to do more; but this, alas! this was the hardest of all. In her earnest devotion, in her very strength of purpose, she would have laid down her life for him if necessary, but this was so harsh, so blighting, so freezing to her young heart, she covered her face, and burst into a passionate agony of tears.

Mr. Van Cleeker regarded her with a troubled countenance.

"My poor daughter," said he, soothingly, "I will not trouble you further for the present with a subject so painful to your feelings. Go, now, and compose yourself, and think on what has passed."

She meekly looked up and presented her cheek for him to kiss, and then retired without another word.

"Miserable man that I am!" soliloquized Mr. Van Cleeker, as he sprang out of bed, and impulsively seized the tongs. "Poor Fanny, poor girl! to be sacrificed and all for—pride. No; he sha'n't have her, unless she wishes it." He stopped short and commenced poking the fire at a furious rate. "If the worst comes to the worst," he resumed, "I have gold. Tarleton knows nothing of that. Greedy dog, he'd claim it too."

The old gentleman fastened the door, and taking out a key went to the closet. Carefully brushing away a pile of rubbish from an iron box, he unlocked and opened it, surveying with complacency the glittering treasure within. "If the worst comes to the worst, I have this legacy for Fanny, but then," the old man's face fell "but then the Van Cleeker mansion—the heritage bequeathed by a proud line of ancestry—will have to be surrendered. Oh, Fanny," he groaned, "little dost thou dream of the motives that impel thy unfortunate father to take a step so degrading to him and thee; but it cannot be otherwise. The name and dignity of the Van Cleeker House must be preserved."

CHAPTER XI.

AN INTERVIEW.

Early the next afternoon Fanny heard a ring at the door-bell, and she guessed too well whose ring it was. It had the same gloomy, foreboding cadence as on the eventful evening of her meeting with Mr. Tarleton.

She had been thinking that morning of all her father had said and she felt that it was at least her duty to try and like a man whom, in her heart, she despised and detested. She would nerve herself to the task; perhaps she was prejudiced, perhaps she had suffered herself to be led away by girlish impressions; time might efface them, years might change them, and the dark picture she had conjured up be only remembered as some gloomy phantom of her imagination.

The chamber door suddenly opened and interrupted her train of thoughts.

It was Mr. Van Cleeker who walked in.

"My dear," said he, approaching her with a cheerful smile radiating his pale countenance, "I have one favor to ask of you. Mr. Tarleton is in the parlor; he wishes to see you. It is my desire you would go down; but yet," he added, observing the sorrowful little face, "if you feel yourself unfitted for the interview to-day, I will spare you."

"Father," she replied, her hands tightly compressing the folds of her dress, "I cannot do otherwise than see him. Why should it be deferred?"

Mr. Van Cleeker affectionately kissed her colorless cheek.

"Yes, true; why should it be deferred?" he repeated. "An interview will soon reconcile you to a match that your childish whims now disapprove. Go, my daughter, open your mind without reserve. Mr. Tarleton already knows that I have announced the subject to you."

With a beating heart Fanny descended to the parlor She fervently hoped that her distressed little countenance and careless toilet might make an unfavorable impression, but, alas for her hopes, Mr. Tarleton no sooner caught sight of the pale, earnest face, and simple attire of the young lady, than he impulsively arose, and for a moment stood entranced by her loveliness.

Fanny dropped one of her bewitching little courtesies. Her cheeks tinged slightly.

"My father sent me—that is, my father told me," she began, in a half inaudible voice.

"Your father sent you," repeated Mr. Tarleton, advancing and taking her two little hands in his. "Ah, why not rather say you came by your own desire, my sweet Fanny!"

How eagerly he watched her, as though endeavoring to read an answer.

Fanny had come down with the resolution of liking Mr. Tarleton, but the moment those fierce eyes lit upon her she felt the same disagreeable sensation stealing over her which she had experienced on the first interview. She could not control it.

"How much prettier it would have sounded," continued he, leading her to a seat, "would it not, Fanny?"

He had grown strangely familiar since their last interview.

"It would not have been the truth," replied the young lady, her lip perceptibly curling.

"Ah! do not say so," continued the lawyer, smilingly detaining her hands which she endeavored to withdraw. "You have grown even lovelier since we last met."

"If father sent me down here only to be insulted," commenced Miss Van Cleeker, her eyes flashing with indignation, "I will——"

"Stay, Fanny," interrupted Job Tarleton, who perceived from the girl's attitude that she was about to rise. "I intend no insult; on the contrary, the reverse. But why, my charmer, treat me thus? I understand from your father that it was all settled; that our relations were perfectly comprehended."

"Mr. Tarleton," replied Fanny, with a desperate effort to be calm, "our relations are those which still prescribe a decency of bearing."

"Indeed! indeed!" rejoined Job Tarleton, in a tone of mock politeness. "You are immensely ceremonious, my dear."

The lawyer, in his vexation, quite forgot his usual cunning. His eyes had grown a shade fiercer.

"Your conduct warrants it," retorted Fanny, "if I am ceremonious."

"Come, come," said Mr. Job Tarleton, impatiently. "I did not expect all this nonsense. You look so pretty, though, I can't afford to scold you. Since the thing is arranged, let us try at least and know each other better."

Now had Mr. Tarleton been exceedingly deferential and polite to the young lady, mixing in a little pretended sorrow, very likely she might have hauled down her colors; but he was so elated by the reflection that nothing, barring Miss Fanny's actual consent, interfered with his prospects, that he permitted his vanity to run ahead of his prudence, and so incontinently ruined himself.

"Let us know each other better," repeated Mr. Job Tarleton, drawing nearer to the young lady, who moved impulsively back.

"That can never be, Mr. Tarleton."

"Indeed; are you quite sure, my charmer?"

"Very sure, perfectly sure," repeated Fanny, with rising indignation. "*Mr. Tarleton, sir!!*"

He had attempted to snatch a kiss, but the little maiden had drawn herself up with such commanding dignity that he paused involuntarily.

"What a divinity!" he exclaimed, gazing at her with fresh admiration. "An angel! a paragon!" Then suddenly changing his tone to one of serious, earnest vehemence, he said: "Fanny Van Cleeker, you do not know how many days and months have passed since the spark of love has been burning here. You do not know, and never can believe, that eyes have been watching you from your earliest years, contented, as it were, to gaze, and ask no more. Oh, my sweet charmer! why is it that now, after all this pilgrimage of love, I should be denied a simple boon, my lawful right?"

"Mr. Tarleton," returned Fanny, impetuously, "were I not bound by filial love stronger than any other tie, I would not stay to answer questions so impertinent. It is true, I am engaged to you; it is true, I am bound to one whom I scarcely know; but I cannot understand why you should expect all this. Remember, sir, we are but strangers."

Poor little Fanny! She had forgotten all her heroic resolutions, all her grand resolves to obey her father. In her indignation she had quite acted up to her natural feelings, and for the time, of every thing else lost sight.

Mr. Job Tarleton sat regarding her for a few moments in mingled astonishment and rage. He had not anticipated so much opposition. It was evident that the girl disliked him.

"My pretty bird," muttered he to himself, "I will soon change your tune." He rose, and closed the parlor door; then walking back with the air of a man who is about to engage in an important undertaking, he drew his seat close to hers, and said: "Now, Fanny, I will have no more of this; I will not humor you. You are my affianced wife, and nothing can prevent it. There, put away that stubborn, frowning face. It was not an hour ago your father told me you approved his wishes, and instead of sour looks, and perverse ways, I expected docile, mild submissiveness. But do not dream, fond girl, that I shall hesitate, to please your caprice; do not think, because I am so willing now to bear your humors, that I am one of those good, easy fools that rest contented with barren words."

"Mr. Tarleton," returned Fanny, shrinking from the fierce eyes that were bent on her, "how can you meanly take advantage of father's confidence to treat me thus? If I am intended for your wife, is *this* the way to woo me, unfeeling man? I will not be bent to your control. A father may give away his daughter, but her heart is still her own."

"Indeed!" replied Job Tarleton, sneeringly. "Is your heart, then, so safely locked up, or is it, as I suspect, my pretty bird, already given to another?"

Fanny curled her lip disdainfully.

"I scorn to deceive you; no one has my heart."

"It may be so," rejoined Job Tarleton, "but whether it be true or not, it matters little, I have the corporeal Fanny, and I want no more."

Mr. Job Tarleton, with this very pleasant little observation, suddenly seized her hands again.

Crimsoning with indignation she made a violent effort to release them, but he still held on tightly, and partly drew her towards him.

"Unhand me, sir!" she said haughtily.

"Unhand you? No! by Heavens; not for a thousand worlds! my dainty girl. I love you only better for your resistance. It makes the courtship spicy!"

As Mr. Job Tarleton said this he attempted to put his arm round her waist, but with one wild desperate effort she succeeded in relasing herself. Springing up, quick as lightning, she seized the poker, which had been lying in the grate till it had become red hot, and brandished it before the eyes of the discomfitted and astonished lawyer.

"Now attempt it if you dare," gasped the little maiden, her black eyes flashing with the spirit of the Van Cleekers, "touch me at your peril."

Mr. Job Tarleton, who had no disposition to test the virtues of this new weapon of warfare, rolled himself on the sofa and laughed immoderately.

"What spirit! bravo! you'll do for Job Tarleton," ejaculated that worthy, regarding her with intense admiration, "if you was one of these tame, bread and butter girls I wouldn't give a snap of my finger for your ladyship; but you are a prize—ha, ha, ha."

"*You* are an insolent fellow!" said Fanny.

"And *you*, my sweetheart, are a little angel!"

"Mr. Tarleton," said Fanny, who was now fast losing her temper, "I think your conduct, sir, is perfectly outrageous."

"And *yours*, my dear, perfectly delicious," responded the lawyer, with the most provoking good humor. "What a pretty little picture you would make, standing there, with your heaving bosom, flowing tresses and sparkling diamond eyes—bravo, it would set an artist in ecstacies! Little pretty boarding school Miss! I can see it still, the same air, the same animation that took Job Tarleton off his feet five years ago. Are you not cruel to one who has been so long a pilgrim at your shrine. Ah! girl, in your very independence you would sacrifice your own father!"

"How, Mr. Tarleton, I do not understand you?" Fanny spoke quickly and anxiously.

The lawyer saw his point, and determined to avail himself of it.

"I speak, girl, of the distress your father must feel on learning of your perverseness; you who affect to love him so, recklessly throw away his happiness, blight his prospects, render him miserable, because you refuse to wed one who holds in the balance his fortune, his very reputation. If you stabbed him outright you could not inflict a more mortal blow."

Fanny covered her face.

"And this," she exclaimed, "this power you use to enslave the daughter. Cruel man!"

"I use no power," returned Mr. Job Tarleton, who saw now, when it was too late, the policy of altering his tactics. "I only speak of your own disposition. Your father is as anxious as I am that the marriage should take place. The interview was to bring about a better understanding between us, but you, foolish girl, have seen fit to mar the whole. If you persist, your father suffers, not I."

"Oh Mr. Tarleton," she replied with imploring earnestness, "what pleasure can you take in forcing a girl into a match, who entertains for you not one single spark of sympathetic feeling. What pleasure can it be to have merely the outward form and know the heart is forever locked against you."

"Bah!" returned Tarleton angrily, "I told you but a moment since, I cared nothing for your heart. I tell you, girl, I do not believe in love; it's a commodity that's easily bought and sold; hundreds can effect it, but the priceless jewel is *possession*. I have you, and I shall wear you at my pleasure."

"Never!" exclaimed Fanny, impetuously; "you shall not even do that. I will not be forced into a marriage with a man I hate. I disown your right to insult me further."

"Fanny Van Cleeker!" said the lawyer, "this is all very pretty, and might do on theatrical boards, but you are not acting, my dear, before an audience, so all these melodramatic airs are thrown away; remember, you are mine—yes, sweet little Miss, *mine*, and you may frown and pout, and shake that pretty head, but it will not alter fate's decree; and thus I claim thee." With one bound Job Tarleton sprang upon the surprised maiden and encircled her in his arms; she screamed and would have fainted, but just at that instant the door swung open, and Mr. Pump stood bowing at the entrance. "You stupid fool!" said the irritated lawyer, releasing the terrified girl, "what did you disturb me for."

Fanny sank on the sofa and burst into tears.

"Hem, a thousand pardons," said Mr. Pump apologetically, "sorry to interrupt a most delightful interchange of sentiment, but business before pleasure, always—ahem!" As Mr. Pump said this he looked significantly at Job Tarleton, who seemed to comprehend it, for catching up his hat, with an air of vexation, he cast one hasty glance at the weeping girl, and then followed his partner out.

"How long has he been waiting," inquired Mr. Job Tarleton as soon as they were fairly in the street.

"A very long while—ahem—very."

"Good Heavens! I have been trifling my time away," muttered Tarleton, as he strode down the street, "that perverse girl! I'll break her spirit yet."

CHAPTER XII.

STARTLING INCIDENTS!

Osborne was now fairly domesticated in the Burglars' Nest.

The novelty of his situation gradually wore away, and he began to feel a strong loathing and distaste for his new life. The Tomtit he had not seen since the eventful evening of their interview, but his ruffianly representatives were constantly close at his heels. Their coarse, noisy, and vulgar conversation—their indolent and dissipated habits—both astonished and disgusted him. It was not to be expected that a fine, sensitive mind like his could affiliate and associate with such depraved and unprincipled characters; yet there was no shaking them off; and so well did he conceal his feelings, that he insensibly acquired an immense popularity, and was honored with the title of "Junior Tomtit," as a mark of their appreciation of his taciturnity and imperturbable coolness.

While outwardly he appeared a reckless sympathizer in their unprincipled schemes, he was bitterly repenting of his folly and imprudence in connecting himself with them. He longed to escape; but in those unfathomable woods he knew it would be madness to think of venturing, for he must soon be tracked out and mercilessly slaughtered. Mr. Molecat, with his gossiping tongue, imparted to him numerous incidents which tended to confirm his abhorrence of their lawless life. From him he learnt that a very unusual scene had lately taken place in the quiet precincts of the Burglars' Nest: the visit of the detective, the plot formed for his destruction, his escape, and subsequent attempt and failure to ferret out the locality, were listened to with absorbing interest by our young adventurer; the Tomtit's manœuvres, and destruction of Squire Darley's bloodhound, moved successively his indignation and sympathy. Ah! how he longed to find the whereabouts of the party and reveal the haunt; but then, on reflection, he dismissed the idea; for even had the opportunity offered of escaping, his good sense at once taught him the utter impossibility of tracing out a place so difficult and inaccessible. One day he thought of one scheme, the next of another, without finding any of them practicable or even possible. Meanwhile he perceived that though the majority of his comrades regarded him with perfect confidence, others looked distrustful and suspicious. Against one of them Osborne had already begun to entertain a violent and settled dislike, and that was our old friend, Mr. Timothy Beg. Wherever Osborne went, whatever he did, and every word he uttered, he knew was scrutinized and commented upon by that cunning official; he sometimes almost fancied he detected in his eye a faint gleam of intelligence, as though reading his thoughts. Osborne was impulsive, and more than once his hand was clenched to knock down his burly spy, but prudence restrained him, and he affected not to observe that he was closely watched.

Some afternoons, in company with several associates—for he was not permitted to go alone—Osborne would take long strolls in the woods, ostensibly to hunt for game, but in reality to examine the locality. His keen eye and retentive memory seemed, however, at fault in discovering and fixing in his recollection the path that led to the Burglars' Nest.

He could hardly restrain an exclamation of admiration at observing how ingeniously Nature had aided the occupants in concealing and hiding from curious eyes its site. More than a dozen times he was baffled and deceived by the mazy labyrinths, and almost despaired of growing any wiser. He was astonished to see how easily his companions would, at a distance of miles, trace out their lonely lair, and he determined to make himself equally conversant with its intricate approach. While apparently earnestly engaged in his pastime, he would carefully survey the immediate locality, and now and then notch with his knife a few marks on the trees or stones to refresh his memory. With unfaltering resolution he persevered, day after day, and soon acquired a perfect knowledge of the country, without letting his comrades really comprehend the extent of his information.

His restless desire to escape from the Nest was now more than ever augmented by the reflection that he could easily find his way from thence; but he was so narrowly watched that it was folly to think of attempting it.

One bleak day, towards the close of the month, Osborne returned from one of these excursions somewhat ahead of his companions, and feeling rather tired, he thought he would step up into his pigeon hole unobserved and take a short nap. So, pulling off his boots, he crept in cautiously, on tiptoe.

As he passed through the entry, he noticed a low conversation going on in the front room. Hearing his own name several times repeated, he involuntarily paused and listened.

"I tell you wot," spoke a voice, which he had no difficulty in recognizing as Mr. Snag's, "this ere Pluck is a rum 'un, aint he?"

There was a general grunt of assent.

"I wos about to observe," chimed in Mr. Molecat, "that that wos my opinion. I wos werry favorably impressed with his manners."

"An'," continued Mr. Snag's voice, "the Tomtit is a rum 'un, too."

A general chorus of laughter followed this remark, and a brief silence followed.

Osborne knew that something was going on, and so pricked up his ears.

"When anybody cheats the Tomtit, they'll know it," continued Mr. Snag. "Now, I believe myself Pluck's all right, but, rot me, if Beg hasn't been saying something that's set him a-working. Wot fun it will be!" Thereupon Mr. Snag's voice could be heard going off in an explosive burst of merriment.

"How will it be managed?" inquired one of the burglars.

"Aint you heard? You know the Tomtit is to give him a pistol, and make out there's a spy in the woods. Beg is fixing up for it; and the trick of the thing will be," pursued Mr. Snag, "that if he is wot Beg thinks he is, he'll be telling him to scud, and p'raps run, too. O, my eyes, wot a go, to see young Pluck a-racing as though the old Nick was after him, thinking he's saving a body, and all the while Beg at his heels!"

At this reflection of the probable result of Osborne's rescuing the traveller, Mr. Snag was heard rolling off the bench in another convulsive ecstacy of mirth.

"Ha!" thought Osborne, "this is the game, is it? Thank heaven, that chance has revealed it!"

He saw at once that a plot was contemplated to test his sincerity, and he shuddered to think how easily he might have fallen into the trap.

Cautiously creeping back he slipped on *his boots, and rejoined his comrades, who had been* searching for him.

"Where you been, Pluck?" inquired one of the burglars.

"Lost my knife, and found it again," returned Osborne, carelessly. As he had apparently caught up with them no suspicion was excited, and they said no more.

All the rest of the day Osborne was thinking of what he had overheard, and had fully made up his mind how to act. He watched Mr. Beg, and observed that that individual all at once disappeared.

Late in the afternoon the Tomtit strode in, with a face of excitement.

"Boys!" exclaimed he, "I have something to announce. A man has been for the last half hour dodging round the neighborhood!"—Every burglar sprang to his feet, and oaths and curses were ripped out in one simultaneous volley.—"A man has been dodging round here," continued the Tomtit, with a bearing so natural that, under any other circumstances, Osborne would have been completely deceived; "and I believe he's a spy, trying to find out our Nest! He may be one of the detective's emissaries! I intend to watch his movements, at any rate—all of you there!"

The Tomtit peremptorily waved his hand, and the whole gang started to the door, with pistols and knives promiscuously brandished.

"Now then, young man," quoth the Tomtit, with a peculiar expression flitting across his stern features—an expression that Osborne thoroughly understood—"here's a chance to show your pluck. We don't know what may happen. We may be outnumbered. I have chosen you to finish the spy. Take this pistol, and mind, lad, any shrinking, and I'll spatter your brains out like rain!"

With this very comfortable promise, the Tomtit handed him the weapon, which Osborne grasped without a word.

Never was acting done so cleverly, and for a space Osborne himself almost doubted whether it was not reality; but, after a short walk, the Tomtit paused, and laying his finger on his lip to enjoin silence, whispered to him:

"Up, there, young man; you'll know when you see him. We'll go round and head him off. Shoot directly at the heart, and the moment we hear the report of your pistol we will join you. The enterprise, you see, is full of danger, but your nerves are fully equal to it. Now go!"

Osborne muttered a well-feigned imprecation, and crept stealthily down the road.

"Now," thought he, "I shall have an opportunity of paying off the scoundrel for his impertinence."

So saying our hero watched, and presently sure enough he saw Beg, disguised as an old man, moving in the same direction. How artfully the Tomtit had been at work. On the features of the counterfeit old gentleman could be traced an honest, confiding expression, such as might suppose to exert an effect on a person of warm sympathies.

Osborne hesitated no longer; raising his weapon carefully, and measuring out his man, he fired, and as the smoke cleared away, rushed upon the unfortunate Mr. Beg, and with the butend of his pistol belabored him with all the energy of his young and vigorous arm.

The official fairly roared for mercy, while with shouts of laughter the burglars burst from their concealment.

Osborne paused in well-feigned astonishment.

"Blast you, why did you hit so hard?" groaned Mr. Beg, the blood rolling down his face.

Osborne still stood staring at them in well-affected wonder.

"O my eyes, wot a go," ejaculated Mr. Snag, fairly rolling on the ground in convulsions of mirth. "Beg, didn't you get it. Oh, Lord! this is jolly, this is!" thereupon Mr. Snag embraced Osborne, in his excessive delight, and the whole troop crowded round him with friendly congratulations and explanations.

To one person besides Mr. Beg this scene afforded no amusement, and that was the Tomtit. With his arms folded, his brow knit, he stood, regarding Osborne, as though the sight of him at that moment had recalled emotions he would gladly choke down.

"Those features, those features!" he murmured; "oh, what demon sent that boy to haunt me now!"

He looked no more, but turning abruptly around, hurried from the spot.

The shades of evening were fast approaching, and the burglars returned homeward.

Osborne, who had been before decidedly a popular character, was now emphatically the pet. Mr. Snag did not conceal his exultation; for his own penetration and reputation for sagacity had been involved in the trial, and he gloried in the triumph of his young protégé.

Mr. Beg, chagrinned and sore with the bruises received, limped home, vowing vengeance on Osborne, who he hinted was not so unsophisticated as they supposed; but all suspicions were for the nonce at an end.

One of the advantages resulting from this incident was, that Osborne no longer found himself under the same strict surveillance. He was permitted to go and do whatever he pleased, his lazy associates being too well gratified to be relieved from the irksome task of watching a pal whom they suspected.

He readily embraced the opportunity to perfect his knowledge of the country, and familiarize himself with the numberless paths that at first so bewildered him. In one of these jaunts or explorations he was enabled to notch a considerable distance with marks that he could not fail to recognize.

"There may be a time when I will find them useful," thought our hero, "and I will make hay while the sun shines."

His old disposition to escape was as strong as ever, but his increased knowledge of the Tomtit's character, and recent fresh experience, warned him of the danger he might incur of being hunted up, and finally assassinated.

"Ah!" thought he, as he was one day taking his solitary ramble through the forest, "of what use is all this information and knowledge that I have gained, since it cannot be imparted to others; miserable existence, where even the society of congenial companions is denied me."

As he gave vent to this sorrowful reflection, he was startled by the report of a rifle, echoing and reverberating amongst the hills. It could not be a quarter of a mile away, and he well knew from the sound that it did not proceed from any of his comrades. He hurried towards the direction from which it came, and was surprised to observe, on reaching the main road, that he had unconsciously wandered a long distance from the "Nest."

Fearful that his prolonged absence might create suspicion, he abandoned his original intention, and was in the act of turning back, when he descried a man about a hundred yards beyond, loading his rifle. He shouted to him, and the other immediately responded. In a few seconds the two gradually approached, and Osborne perceived he was a country youth, of stout, herculean build, perhaps younger than himself. Delighted to meet with one of his own age, Osborne impulsively extended his hand.

Colin, for it was no other than he, *immediately grasped it in his blunt fashion, and shook it heartily.*

"Who are you, and what are you doing here?" inquired Colin, surprised to meet with a young stranger in the wilds of Pennsylvania. Osborne's dress, too, was peculiar: a red shirt and glazed cap; in his belt were a brace of pistols and a knife.

The country youth looked at him scrutinizingly; there might have been a shade of suspicion, but casting his eye on the feminine, almost girlish face, he was satisfied.

"My name is Osborne," replied our hero, "and now tell me yours."

"Colin Goodwin," returned the other, still staring at the frank, smiling face. "Been a hunting?"

"Yes, I have," replied Osborne.

"Hunting after what?" queried Colin with another suggestive look at the pistols and knife.

"Hunting after *burglars*!" rejoined Osborne, quietly.

Colin fairly staggered back in mute surprise. Osborne commenced laughing.

"Do you mean what you say, or are you joking?"

"Never was more serious in my life," returned Osborne, with a quiet smile. "*Why* didn't *you* ever see any?"

"Mr. Osborne," returned Colin, whose face looked very much puzzled and astonished, "you are speaking riddles to me. What can you mean?"

"Well, come, answer my question," replied Osborne, good humoredly, "and I will tell you."

"Then," rejoined Colin, his eyes once more resting on the weapons stuck in Osborne's belt, "if I should say I never met with any, what would it signify?"

"Not much," returned Osborne, drily, "because you wouldn't say right."

"How do you know?" asked Colin, eagerly. He had moved back, and stood regarding his new acquaintance in silent astonishment.

"Why," said Osborne, as cautious as the other, "because I do, that's all."

As this was not a very satisfactory reply, Colin looked into his companion's face, and finally his honest features relapsed into a smile.

"You are trying to quiz me?"

"No, I am not," replied Osborne, shaking his head. There was so much sincerity in that handsome face, that Colin felt ashamed of his momentary suspicion.

"Look here," said he, going up to him, "let's understand each other."

"Certainly!" replied Osborne, impulsively. "Let us understand each other, and before we proceed further, you had better take my pistols and knife, lest you might think I intend mischief. Here goes my gun!" thereupon Osborne tossed it a yard off.

"Now, as I am unarmed," said he, "I will be more frank."

"Very good," replied Colin, hardly comprehending its expediency, yet following the example of his companion, and laying aside his rifle; "how came you to know that I had ever met with burglars?"

"For this reason," replied Osborne, coolly, "that you have met with an inmate of the Burglar's Nest to-day. *I am the one!*"

If the Tomtit himself had suddenly darted on Colin, he could not have been more confounded.

"You!" he ejaculated, "you connected with the burglars; never! your face, your manners say nay. You are deceiving me?"

"Deceiving you!" repeated Osborne, his face flushing, "you wrong me; I am not deceiving you. Here stands before you an inmate of the Burglar's Nest; and would these eyes had never looked on walls unhallowed as those by deeds of darkness and of crime. Oh! think not because I wear their garb—because I have breathed the pestilential air of their foul den—that I am one of them, or ever held communication with them. Thank God! I may be instrumental yet in blotting out this haunt—this den of iniquity." With graphic earnestness, and thrilling eloquence, Osborne proceeded to relate substantially, his adventures, not forgetting the minutest circumstance already detailed to the reader.

Colin listened, in breathless interest and when he had concluded he enthusiastically embraced him.

"Dear Osborne!" he exclaimed, "does it not seem strange that we should meet?"

"It does, indeed," returned Osborne. "It seems as though I was sent there to be the instrument of retribution. From what you have occasionally dropped, I fancy you must have been one of the party that attempted to find the Nest."

"I was," rejoined Colin, "and worse luck hardly could have befallen us. Squire Darley swears he never will rest easy till he finds 'em. Poor Mr. Duffy left here quite downcast. Osborne, let us return to father's house, and there devise some plan of attack. If we are active, this very night we will pour our hot bullets down the villains' throats."

Osborne smiled at his friend's enthusiasm.

"Goodwin," said he, "you are too rash. A night assault would be a very dangerous and useless experiment. I hardly think I could guide you safely in the evening, besides we must not hurry into it. It needs careful reflection. The chief of the gang is a man of most excellent invention and daring courage. With his knowledge of the country, and cunning expedients, he would easily annihilate double your number. No; let us go calmly to work. In the meantime I must return."

"What! back to the Burglar's Nest?" ejaculated the amazed youth. "Oh, Osborne, I would not risk it."

"Don't you see," rejoined Osborne, with the same quiet smile, "that by my returning it will allay all suspicion, and give your friends an opportunity of surprising them; whereas, if I staid away, they would immediately suspect something was going wrong, and be prepared to receive us. No, before anything is done, let us talk the matter over again by ourselves. I will meet you again to-morrow; keep this matter secret till then."

"Just as you say," returned Colin; "but where will you meet me?"

"Under yonder tree, at the same hour. I shall not fail. You'll be there?"

"Certain, I will," replied Colin; "and now, my friend, good bye. May Heaven preserve you!"

The two young men affectionately embraced, and took their several routes.

Colin watched his companion as long as he could see him, and then wended his way homeward, musing on the extraordinary adventure. He longed to tell his father the good news, but true to his promise, he said nothing. At the supper-table Mr. Goodwin noticed his abstracted manner, but attributed it to the fatigue and excitement of hunting.

All that night Colin slept not—he lay awake thinking and planning, and was up long before dawn. How anxiously he waited for the morning to pass. It seemed to creep by on leaden wings. He watched the clock till it struck twelve, and then he seized his rifle and stole softly out. He walked briskly on, mile after mile, and soon reached the place of rendezvous; a few yards off he thought he discerned the red shirt of Osborne, but he was disappointed.

Osborne had not yet arrived. Remembering, in his impatience, he had reached there considerably in advance of the time appointed, he sat down and waited. One hour passed—two hours—then three, but no Osborne. The afternoon was far advanced, but still no signs of his absent friend.

What could be the reason? Had he been suspected and detained, or had he been watched, and slaughtered by the ruffians on his return? These were idle conjectures, after all, and he dismissed them as improbable. But what could have detained him? Perhaps he might even then be hastening onward. With the faint hope that Osborne had missed his way, he discharged his rifle in the air as a signal. The echoes went pealing and reverberating along the cliffs till they died away in hollow murmurs in the distance. All was quiet. The sun was just descending behind the hills, and the cool evening breeze came whistling through the dead foliage, yet Colin still stood at his post, looking out anxiously for his missing friend.

[TO BE CONTINUED IN OUR NEXT.]

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THE LEPRECHAUN.

Many centuries ago, when the fairies or "wee people" of Ireland took an active part in the affairs of such human beings as they loved, a nobleman lived in Castle Ennis, on the banks of the Fergus, who had squandered his princely estate in riotous living. His lands had been sold year after year, by his steward to raise funds, until all his domain was dotted over with the cabins of the small proprietors, even to the very gates of his castle. On seeing the ruin that he had thus brought upon himself, his lordship one day withdrew from his roystering companions, and betook himself to the hills, to meditate upon his present condition and his future course. As he lay with his face to the ground, he heard a tiny, musical voice singing these words:

> "Every mortal has his grief;
> Each one thinks that his is chief
> But son of an illustrious line,
> There are deeper griefs than thine;
> *Pe brave then*, and a while endure;
> A friendly sprite will name a cure:—
> *Beneath this hill's a golden store,*
> *Will thy broad lands again restore.*"

The young nobleman was almost certain he was dreaming. But to satisfy his mind upon the subject, he withdrew his hands from his face, and looking up in the direction from whence the sweet music seemed to come, beheld seated upon a point of the rock over his head, a diminutive little fellow, who, with one leg crossed over the other, and one arm thrown carelessly over the limb of a birch, stretching over the rock, was peering good-naturedly down upon him. Repeating the two last lines of his song—the little man swung himself clear from the rock, and leaping to the ground, with a frolicsome sort of a laugh, disappeared in a narrow crevice of the hill-side.

Now, although my lord had never seen this musical little fellow before, nor in fact any of the *wee folks*, he knew well enough that he was the LEPRECHAUN, that most important little personage who was the custodian of all hidden treasures. All the gold and silver, all the precious gems, the diamonds, sapphires, rubies, amethysts, emeralds, and all the world-coveted jewels that were not already in the possession of mortals, were in his safe keeping. Lucky, indeed, was that chosen one to whom this fairy treasurer revealed any of his secret repositories.

The young man resolved at once to act upon the hint thus given him; and so, instead of returning to his castle, he went to the humble laborers living at the foot of the mountains, and engaged them to dig into the hill underneath which the Leprechaun said the treasure was lying. That the people might not distrust his real object, the nobleman informed his chief workman that beneath the soil lay a quarry of rare building stone he required for additional walls to his castle.

Well, they dug away with great industry all the day; and after displacing vast quantities of earth, reached the solid rock, and commenced with their iron drills to penetrate into the quarry. But night overtaking them, they were obliged to desist till the following day.

On returning to the hill the next morning, what was the astonishment of the workmen, to find that the earth they had dug out with so much toil had all been replaced; and everything appeared as if not a spear of grass or an inch of the sod had been turned down. And for three successive days and nights, this strange phenomenon occurred; when his lordship, determined not to be baffled, sent over the country and collected laborers enough to level the enchanted hill in a single day; and the more to encourage the men, he himself took up a pick, and accompanied them in their toil. The poteen was dealt out freely; and under its strength-giving influence they worked with a will; and long before the sun had cooled his beams beyond the waves of Galway Bay, they had dug away the hill, and come to a deep crack, or crevice, in the limestone rock, which had been its base.

The nobleman approached the opening, and looked down. By degrees, as his eyes became accustomed to the darkness that filled it, he observed a flight of stone steps leading down the narrow passage. His heart now beat strong with hope, for he was sure that down these stairs lay the way to the golden treasures the Leprechaun had promised him. Without speaking a word, and making a sign to the workmen to keep perfect silence, he descended into the darkness.

He must, as he himself stated in after years, have passed down at least a hundred steps, when he came to the glimmering of a light. This he found, proceeded from another horizontal opening, through which he discovered a large room, filled with piles of golden coin, scattered here and there, while large bins were heaping-full of the costliest and rarest gems and jewels that mortal eyes ever gazed upon.

At the farther end of this hall, was burning a large peet fire, and in the corners of the wide fireplace, on each side, sat an old man, and a little old woman, while on the great hearth, between them, reposed a huge dog, with his nose between his outstretched paws, and his face directed towards the rent in the rock.

The old people were dozing on their stools, and appeared to have been in this position for centuries. They were extremely wrinkled, and the old man's beard, which was as white as snow, was so long that it swept the ground at his feet; while the old woman's matted hair was of the same venerable appearance.

His lordship dared not arouse these guardians of the vault, for fear of serious consequences from the attack of the fierce looking dog. So he softly clambered over the opening, and stepping noiselessly along, on the tips of his toes, reached the nearest pile of golden coins, and hastily filled the ample pockets of his breeches, and his long skirted surtout, and started to leave the vault.

But in his greediness, he had filled his pockets too full,—for, as he was clambering again over the rocky wall, on his way to the stairs, the heavy pieces proving too much for the integrity of his breeches, burst the pockets asunder, rattled upon the stony floor, and rolled noisily to the feet of the old couple.

All was now in terrible confusion! The noise awoke the fierce mastiff, whose loud bayings instantly aroused the other sleepers; these in turn filled the vault with the most unearthly screeches—fearful mutterings of thunder were heard rolling up from the centre of the earth; and, before the imprudent nobleman could reach the stairway leading to the upper world, the crevice closed with an awful sound; and then, to his utter dismay and horror, he found himself enclosed in the embrace of the solid rock! The hill returned again to its former condition.

How his lordship escaped none ever knew—save himself and his friend the Leprechaun.

Years after this wonderful event, the fame of which had gone all over the country, there appeared in the town of Ennis, an old traveller. From whence he came none knew. He had brought immense wealth of gold and precious jewels with him. He purchased acre after acre of the identical lands that had once been the great domain of the rollicking young lord, till at length he had become master of all that estate, together with the castle, which he put in complete repair; and when all had been accomplished, and the old man found himself in possession of every foot of the parks and hills, and the banks of the beautiful Fergus, and all the unsightly cabins had been razed to the ground, he gave a great feast to the people, and then announced to them that he was none other than that lord of Ennis Castle, who, many years before had built it, and filled it with noisy roystering, Irish bloods, and whose youthful prodigality had made him so long a stranger from its walls.

The nobleman and his castle have long since disappeared from the land. But the Hill of the Buried Treasures, and this legend of it still remain; the one regarded with superstitious awe by the simple country people; and the other daily repeated to the credulous ears of admiring children.

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DREAMS—INSTRUCTIVE AND FEARFUL.

BY CLARA SYDNE

There is no disputing that God did, in the earlier ages of this world, speak to his people in dreams and visions; but now, with the fuller light of revelation to look to, we are not to expect personal guidance in that primitive way.

And yet some dreams are truly worth the telling; and there are not wanting persons who assert that many have been found to be worth believing.

We had a youthful friend once—a girl of strange, brilliant nature, which no one in or about her home seemed able to understand or control. She disappeared at last, and for some time no trace of her was discovered.

Of course there was great anxiety and trouble of mind suffered by her friends, and such measures as were deemed advisable were taken for learning what had become of the missing one; but all was quite in vain.

There was a lady visiting the aunt of the lost young woman. This lady, on joining the family one morning, said: "I dreamed last night of seeing Marah. I thought there was a high, barren mountain, cleft to the very base, and that in the bottom of the chasm thus formed, far, far below where any sun-ray ever shone, sat Marah. She sat upon a square block of stone, and held to her bosom a babe. She looked listless, and indifferent to her situation, which was, to my apprehension, fearful in the extreme; for in addition to the desolation of the scene in which she formed the central object, there were, skulking about in the rocks above her, and peering and leering down upon her, two dark-browed, evil-faced men, one of whom had a gun, which he seemed to be trying to point at her. But he could never take aim to suit him, since rock or shrub was always between the woman and the gun.

"The effect of this dream is very disagreeable. I cannot rid myself of the impression that Marah is, indeed, seated, desolate and despairing, at the bottom of a granite mountain, that a babe is with her, and that men seek some safe and sure way to take her life."

It *was* a strange dream, and it caused shuddering in the hearts of Marah's friends. Afterwards it was said that Marah's fate was such as the dream suggested; but whether the men murdered her or not was never known.

* * * * * * * *

A young man, in his sleep, thought he came unexpectedly upon one who had very grievously injured and insulted him. This enemy sat quietly upon a stone on the very verge of a precipice hundreds of feet deep. A slight push would throw him over, and the devil entered into the sleeper's heart. He crept softly up behind the unconscious youth, and with a sudden bound he was upon him. The push which he gave *ought* to have sent him that received it toppling headlong. But things never act in dreams as elsewhere, and the push only served to bring the enemy to his feet, and instantly there was a deadly hand to hand struggle. Every muscle was set, every nerve was strained, the clenched teeth, the straining eye-ball, the panting breath, all betokened the passion and the purpose of each wrestler. To throw his enemy over the cliff was the aim of each one.

Nearer and nearer every moment they drew to the fatal verge. Now it was this one, and now that, who seemed most likely to be conquered. But what has caught the dreamer's glaring eye? The cliff is parting from the mainland—a horrid gap, which is growing rapidly wider, is between the combatants and the path. They are both lost!

The wild and unearthly yell which burst from the dreamer's heart as he beheld this, and as he at the same time felt the descending motion of the whole mass on which he was, awoke him, and as he lay in a clammy dew of terror and distress, he was glad enough to answer to the voice that seemed ringing in his ears—

"Vengeance is *mine; I* will repay."

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THE STEPMOTHER;

OR,

WHO'S TO WIN.

BY J. F. SMITH,

AUTHOR OF "RICHARD HOFFMAN," "STANFIELD HALL," "MINNIGREY," ETC. ETC. ETC.

CHAPTER LV.

> The rabble gather round the man of news,
> And listen with their mouths wide open:
> Some tell, some hear, some judge, some make it;
> And he that lies most loud is most believed. DRYDEN.

Within an hour after the visit of Collin Craw to the poor-house, Rumor, with her hundred tongues, had circulated almost as many different reports in Wicksal. The inhabitants stood clustered in knots in the principal streets, talking and hinting at strange things. Some of the best informed asserted that Humphrey Skillet had murdered Sir Barnard Gaston—right in the fact of a murder, but not in the person murdered; others, that the baronet had shot Miles Goring in a fit of passion. One or two declared the idiot Zach.—the only name the unfortunate locksmith was known by—had done it. All agreed that something terrible had occurred at the Lodge—a place regarded with suspicion ever since the ex-landlord of the Travellers' Rest had taken up his abode there.

No one could understand why its owner should have accepted such a character as a tenant. As for the cripple, he had long been the object of popular aversion and superstition. The few who had seen him looked upon him as something scarcely human.

King and Hollis, the town constables, found themselves personages of great importance in the eyes of their neighbors. Well-to-do tradesmen, including the lawyer and apothecary in the number, who had hitherto rather looked down upon them, were suddenly seized with a strong desire to cultivate their acquaintance. At every step, invitations—disinterested ones, no doubt—to take a morning draught were forced upon them, and briefly declined, for the very sufficient reason that the men were better paid for keeping silent.

It would have been most unnatural had the female portion of the population shown less curiosity than their husbands, fathers, and brothers; but with the tact peculiar to their sex, they applied to a different source for information.

Mrs. Hollis—King was a bachelor—never had received so many visitors—gossips and acquaintances dropped in as usual, without ceremony; those of the upper class—uppish, perhaps, would have been a better word—who had suddenly discovered what an interesting, excellent person the neighbor—whose existence they had hitherto ignored—really was, did not come empty-handed. One notable wife, recollecting that Mrs. H. had never tasted her squab pie, on the confection of which she justly prided herself, dropped in to repair the omission; another brought a muggety pie, a well known Cornish dainty, anxious, no doubt, to hear the opinion of the constable's wife of its merits.

As for doat-figs, amen nuts, and fogans, the relics of last Furry-day, sufficient quantities were brought to furnish a small shop.

Although greatly puzzled to account for such extraordinary liberality, Mrs. Hollis, like a prudent woman, accepted everything that was offered her, and no doubt would willingly have gratified the curiosity of her old and new acquaintances, had it been in her power; but, unfortunately, she knew as little what had occurred at West Lodge as her visitors, her husband not having returned to the house since Squire Beachum sent for him.

"A shocking affair," observed the lady of the squab pie, seating herself in the nearest chair, and preparing herself to listen to a tale of horror.

"Awful!" replied Mrs. Hollis, turning up her eyes to the ceiling.

"All Wicksal rings with it."

"Well it may," said the constable's wife, secretly wondering what it was all about.

"My dear Mrs. H., do tell us all the particulars," exclaimed the muggety pie. "We are all friends here, and you may rely on our discretion."

"All friends," repeated the amen nuts, doat figs, and fogan in a chorus.

"We know," added one of the best informed, "that your husband and King accompanied the great London lawyer to search the poor-house for the master's papers. I saw them leave myself. Has Skillet really committed murder?"

"Suspected! nothing positively known at present," was the prudent reply.

"But whom has he murdered?"

Mrs. Hollis uttered a half-suppressed groan, and shook her head, as if the secret was too terrible to be imparted by words.

"Horrible!" ejaculated her visitors, regarding each other significantly.

"The master of the workhouse really is a prisoner, then?"

"I don't know whether my husband has taken him yet," answered the wife of the constable, evasively; "I have not seen him since the squire sent for him this morning."

"He must be a prisoner," said the lawyer's lady. "Poor Mrs. Penguin, who is really a most respectable person, in her way, although, of course, we do not visit, has twice attempted to hang herself. She is distracted about him, silly creature."

"Hang herself!" repeated her hearers with astonishment.

"I know it for certain," added the veracious informant; "my maid's brother, who is apprenticed to the first cousin of the parish schoolmaster, heard his master tell Markham, the undertaker's daughter, whom he's paying attentions to, all about it. Bolt, the porter, cut her down, and it took seven of the paupers to hold her."

This, as Shakespeare says, was the "lie circumstantial."

The mistress of the house secretly vowed vengeance against her husband for keeping her so long in ignorance of such deeply-interesting events.

The excitement of her visitors was at its hight, and it might have been difficult, with all her ingenuity, to parry the questions so eagerly and searchingly put, much longer, when the mother of King, the second constable, arrived, breathless with haste, and anxious to relieve her mind of the mighty secret laboring within it.

"Who would have thought it?" she gasped, sinking into a chair; "not I, bad as they are. Master Hugh shot! Sir Barnard and Humphrey Skillet both in custody."

"I did not tell it," exclaimed Mrs. Hollis, trying to look exceedingly knowing.

"That you did not," observed the donor of the muggety pie, looking somewhat regretfully at the dainty offering she had brought with her.

The news, which this time approached somewhat nearer to the truth, circulated quickly through the town. All Wicksal was in commotion, and for the rest of the day the little town resembled a hive of bees suddenly disturbed. Such swarming, buzzing, and settling down again!

The bearer of ill news is said to arrive quickly to those most interested in the event; unfortunately, however, it did not prove so on the present occasion; rumors of the dreadful crime arrived at Moultree before Edward, who had started to break the intelligence to Lady Alicia and her daughter-in-law. At first they penetrated no farther than the servants' hall—even then it was only whispered—no one could say exactly how they had heard it; the upper domestics, with the exception of the housekeeper, prudently affected to disbelieve it. She wrung her hands. "I knew it would end thus—the curse is coming home to him."

"What curse?" inquired the butler, curiously.

"Do speak plainly," added the steward.

"She can if she likes," observed the coachman, with a knowing look.

The housekeeper did not like, but, on the contrary, screwed her terror-blanched lips together is if to keep guard over them.

At the same time the bell in Mrs. Gaston's room rang twice, a signal that the services of Mrs. Squires were required. With a painful effort she rose to leave the room.

From the hour the mother of Hugh heard of his disappearance from the rectory, she had been gradually sinking. His return might, perhaps, have arrested the blow of the fell Destroyer for a time, but the seeds of death had long been sown; her unhappy marriage had planted them, and grief at the cruel deception practiced by her worthless husband watered them with its tears. Never had an existence been more completely blighted. As a wife she had been wretched: as a widow, known no other solace than her children; and now one was snatched from her—the noble boy who should have been her defender against the tyranny of Sir Barnard—the protector of his sister. The poor, neglected woman was seated in an easy chair, in her dressing-room, attended only by her daughter, when Lady Alicia made her morning visit, to ask, with cold formality, how she had passed the night.

"Wretchedly! miserably!" was the reply.

"You give way *too* much," remaked her ladyship.

Mrs. Gaston looked at her reproachfully.

"Firmness," added the strong-minded woman, "is a virtue under trial. The anxieties poor Egbert caused me were most distressing, but I never let any one perceive how deeply I felt them."

Having uttered this consolatory speech, her mother-in-law seated herself.

"No news! no letters!" sighed the widow.

"The bag has not been opened yet," observed the mistress of the mansion; "Sir Barnard is absent."

"Shall I run and see, mamma?" inquired little Lydia, kissing the white, thin hand of the invalid.

"Go, darling," whispered Mrs. Gaston.

The child was about to leave the room, when Lady Alicia; prevented her, by observing that she did not approve of her speaking with the servants.

Still the same cold tyranny, thought the anxious mother.

"Ring for Squires," added her ladyship. "I will inquire."

Her grand-daughter did as she was desired, and in a few minutes the housekeeper made her appearance. It was impossible not to observe the pale, terrified expression of her countenance, as she reeled rather than walked into the room.

"Has the letter-bag arrived?" demanded her mistress.

"No! yes!—that is, I—I—" faltered the woman, confusedly.

"No, yes, that is, I—I?" repeated Lady Alicia, deliberately. "Are you in your senses, this morning, Squires, that you answer me thus incoherently?"

"Scarcely, my lady."

"Something has occurred!" exclaimed Mrs. Gaston, starting from her easy chair, and tottering towards the housekeeper. "Some news of my poor boy? Tell it; let me hear the worst! anything rather than endure this torturing suspense!"

"Nonsense!" observed her mother-in-law, impatiently. "The woman is either tipsy or a fool. Leave the room!"

At this accusation the old housekeeper, although she had been trained in all proper respect for those above her, tossed her head indignantly. There was a limit even to her patience, and she repeated the word "tipsy!" in a tone that startled her haughty mistress.

"Speak!" almost shrieked the widow. "My heart is breaking!"

"Leave the room!" iterated Lady Alicia in a still more peremptory tone. "Must I order you twice?"

"Poor Master Hugh has been shot," said Mrs. Squires. "And Sir Barnard is in custody at West Lodge, for the crime."

The mistress of Moultree stood for an instant like one thunder struck at the strange and horrible intelligence. Reflection, however, convinced her of its absurdity; and she was about to reprimand the speaker, harshly for daring to utter such a falsehood, when a deep-drawn groan arrested her attention. Mrs. Gaston was falling to the ground, her daughter clinging to her in all the affection of childhood.

"Mamma! mamma!" shrieked the child.

"Wretch!" said her ladyship to the terrified housekeeper, "see what you have done!"

Mrs. Squires sprang forward just in time to receive the broken-hearted mother in her arms; but assistance came too late; the last chord that bound her to life had given way, and the widow of Captain Egbert was a corse.

There are few persons in the world, however heartless, that can gaze unmoved upon death. The more intense the selfishness of the beholder the greater the impression produced. The proud, ambitious woman felt the shock; conscience, perhaps, reproved her for the part she had acted towards her, and the example reminded her that she was herself mortal.

The sobs and cries of Lydia, now doubly an orphan, recalled her in some degree to self possession, and, taking the youthful mourner by the hand, she led her from the room.

An hour later the Templar arrived at Moultree, with the intention of breaking the sad intelligence. The interview with his aunt proved a most painful one. She listened to him in gloomy silence, till thoroughly informed of all that had taken place the preceding night at West Lodge. Then the bitterness of her feelings broke forth.

"You may spare your condolence, Edward," she exclaimed, with a sneer. "I know the exact value of words, and how to appreciate your sorrow at an event that removes the last barrier between you and the baronetcy."

"As usual—painfully, cruelly unjust, Lady Alicia," observed her nephew. "I never felt the slightest desire to inherit the title. It has not conferred happiness," he added, "on its possessor."

"True," murmured the conscience-stricken woman to herself—"most true. And where is my husband?" she asked, fixing her eyes upon her unwelcome visitor.

"At West Lodge."

"And why is he not here?" demanded Lady Alicia, haughtily.

"The magistrate, out of consideration for his family," replied Edward, "directed the officers who have him in charge, to remain with him there till the inquest and examination."

"A prisoner! Sir Barnard Gaston a prisoner!" exclaimed the mistress of Moultree, in a tone of indignant surprise; "is Beachum mad, to have permitted such an unheard-of outrage? He will live to repent it. All who have been concerned in last night's work," she added, "shall bitterly repent it."

"Repentance," observed the Templar, "sooner or later, comes to most of us. Our neighbor has performed his duty firmly, but kindly; and no one will rejoice more sincerely than he will, should my uncle succeed in proving his innocence of the fearful crime he is charged with."

"Charged with!" repeated his aunt sarcastically; "by you, no doubt—his expectant heir. Oh! 'tis a deep-laid scheme; but Heaven will defeat it. A prisoner!" she repeated to herself; "the shame of such an insult will kill him. Infamous! most infamous! And you the cause!"

To this passionate accusation her relative made no reply. In her present state of mind it would have been useless. He felt that his heart acquitted him.

"There is no pretense for such unheard-of tyranny," continued the lady, in the same excited strain. "You yourself declare that Hugh met his death from a shot fired by the man Skillet."

"I am a witness that Sir Barnard was in the house when the crime was committed."

"The pretense, then, is most shallow."

"You forget," said Edward, "that the death of poor Hugh is not the only crime justice will have to inquire into. The man Miles Goring has been assassinated."

"Ridiculous! What motive?" interrupted his aunt.

"And that a wretched cripple, long supposed to be an idiot, has been discovered; a mutilated, miserable being, who has been for years a prisoner at West Lodge."

"His name? Have you learnt his name?"

"Andrews," replied the Templar, fixing his eyes upon her, reproachfully, for the unhappy man had confessed to him the particulars of his crime, as well as the punishment it had entailed.

Lady Alicia inquired no further. A deadly pallor overspread her face. Her sin had found her. The weak desire of penetrating her husband's secret had not only destroyed her son, but ultimately brought dishonor upon his father. Still she did not despair. She was quite clear-sighted enough to perceive that the abduction of the locksmith, and the cruelties subsequently practiced upon him, were the only serious charges the baronet would have to answer. The one of carrying off the boy Earl he might easily meet, by proving him his grandson.

It was a singular combination of perplexities. Like most men who enter on a career of crime, Sir Barnard had found the path straight at first and easy enough to follow. Gradually, however, it had become a tangled maze, from which he could only extricate himself by establishing the rights he had sinned so deeply to frustrate.

Her ladyship rang the bell, and ordered her carriage for West Lodge instantly.

"It will be useless," observed Edward Gaston, as the servant left the room. "You will not be permitted to see him."

"Not see him!"

"Such are the magistrate's orders."

"Infamous! In his own house, too."

"That, as I told you," replied her nephew, rising to take his leave, "was to avoid the necessity of his passing the night in a prison. After the examination his friends, no doubt, will be admitted to him. Is there any way," he added, "in which my services can be useful? If there is, pray command them."

"None!" muttered his aunt, hoarsely.

"Do not, I entreat you," exclaimed Edward, "let your dislike—your unfounded suspicions of my motives, deprive you of the services of the nearest male relative of my unhappy uncle in these distressing circumstances."

"I am aware that you are the nearest male relative of my husband," observed the mistress of Moultree, bitterly; "but it does not follow that you are his heir. The estates were entailed only on the issue of Sir Barnard."

"I know it, aunt."

"The barren title," added the haughty woman, "may indeed be yours."

"Not whilst the son, the first-born child of my cousin Egbert lives to claim it," replied her nephew, gravely. "Lady Alicia, let me entreat of you to see your grandson. A queen might be proud of such a descendant, for Nature has not been more liberal of her gifts than Heaven in the endowment of his mind. Use your influence with Sir Barnard to induce him to acknowledge his heir. Remember, that although the past cannot be recalled, it is not too late, by repentance, to atone it."

With this warning and advice the Templar quitted the room, and left the Hall immediately. As he rode through the Park, a thousand painful recollections thronged upon him: scenes of his earlier days, when he and Maude were children together, and the first seeds of love were sown.

The flowers, alas! had proved but bitterness. On his return to Brook House, he found that one magistrate only had arrived, a Colonel Bains, for years a bitter political opponent of the baronet, but a man of unblemished honor, who felt the peculiar delicacy of his position.

"We really must postpone the examination till after the inquest," he observed; "Sir Thomas Blake, the major, and Lord Hawtree will be here by that time. Meanwhile, I see no inconvenience in allowing the prisoner to remain at West Lodge, in charge of the officers."

"Sir Barnard, but not the murderer Skillet," answered Squire Beachum.

As the colonel did not feel the slightest hesitation in acting in Humphrey's case, the evidence of one of the witnesses was taken, and a warrant issued for his removal to the prison. Both magistrates thought it best not to fully commit him, lest it should interfere with the proceedings at the inquest.

In those days, as at present, there was a great clash of jurisdiction.

Dr. Trevanion was the only gentleman present who expressed no surprise when informed of the death of Mrs. Gaston. He had long been aware that the unhappy lady suffered from a disease of the heart, which any sudden shock or violent surprise might terminate fatally.

"Perhaps it is for the best," he observed. "Her marriage was a most unhappy one. I pity the poor orphan girl left to the guardianship of Lady Alicia."

During the day Collin Craw received two communications which greatly surprised him: one was an abject entreaty from Humphrey Skillet that he would visit him in prison; the second, a note from the matron of the work-house requesting to see him.

He smiled at the address—"To Collin Craw, Esq."

"Curiosity and hope," he thought. "Mrs. Penguin wants to learn all that has taken place respecting the murder. My old tormentor weakly believes that I can save him.

"It would be both painful and useless," he replied to the goaler who brought the message. I can do nothing for him. He is in the hands of justice."

"I don't think it is that, sir," replied the man, respectfully; "Mr. Skillet has something upon his mind."

"Most persons have."

"And I am pretty sure it regards yourself."

"Regards me!" repeated the lawyer, with surprise.

"Yes, sir."

Collin reflected for an instant, and finally resolved upon seeing the criminal, but not till he had consulted Edward Gaston and Mr. Beachum, who both advised him to comply with the request.

"Your ward will be quite safe with me," observed the worthy magistrate. "Poor boy! he has not yet recovered the shock of last night's adventure. The two youths could not have loved each other more dearly, had they been aware of the tie which existed between them."

He was right. William, instead of feeling satisfaction at the prospect of rank and fortune so unexpectedly opened to him, could not have been more grieved had he been reared with the expectations, and suddenly deprived of them. What were the adventitious advantages of birth and wealth, to a pure and innocent heart like his, compared with the loss of one he had learned to love so truly?

Whilst Collin Craw is on his way to the jail, musing on the nature of the communication Humphrey Skillet desired to make to him, we must request our readers to return with us once more to Moultree Hall and its imperious mistress, who was slowly gathering her energies for the struggle she foresaw she would soon have to engage in; for the warning of her nephew had fallen upon ears long since closed to all but the pleadings of ambition, and the suggestions of a pride that had already entailed such disastrous consequences upon the name of Gaston.

Her first act was to visit her grand-daughter, and endeavor to console her in her unexpected bereavement. The orphan listened to her words with indifference. Childhood has singular instincts. She felt, probably, that they did not come from the heart.

Having performed what she was pleased to consider her duty, Lady Alicia next directed the steward to send the housekeeder to her, in the library; her mind being fully made up to dismiss her from her service.

It is a difficult thing, sometimes, and always an ungracious one, to get rid of an old servant.

At least, her ladyship found it so; but we must leave their interview to the ensuing chapter.

CHAPTER LVI.

Mighty proud—to humble weak does yield. SPENSER.

If Mrs. Squires felt no strong affection for the family she had so long resided with, she entertained a decided attachment to the place, and fully made up her mind not to leave it, unless at the last extremity. She had never been a favorite with her imperious mistress, who fancied Sir Barnard much too indulgent to her. The woman knew this, and expected but little consideration at her hands. No wonder, therefore, that she made her appearance in the library with a half sullen, half repentant air.

"I shall never forgive myself, my lady, indeed I shall not," she exclaimed, courtseying from habit rather than respect, at every word; "but it was not my fault. Poor Mrs. Gaston was so anxious, your ladyship so impatient with me, and I so terrified, that I could not for the life of me——"

"Your excuses are an impertinence," interrupted the mistress of Moultree, "which I shall not condescend to listen to. Your folly has killed my daughter-in-law."

"Poor, dear lady," sobbed the housekeeper. "I would have died rather than harmed her. Every one in the house loved and pitied her. She is at peace at last."

"You will give up your keys to the butler," said her ladyship, "and leave the Hall within an hour. The house-steward will settle your wages."

"Turned away!" ejaculated Mrs. Squires.

"You have heard me."

"After so many years' service in the family—*faithful service*," she repeated, with a marked emphasis upon the former word.

"Your late wickedness has cancelled them," observed her mistress, harshly.

"Oh, my lady! I know that I have acted imprudently," exclaimed the woman; "but indeed—and indeed, I did not mean to do so; I was so upset by hearing of Master Hugh's death, and my master being in prison, that I quite lost all self-possession. Pray forgive me; it will be long before I forgive myself."

"It ought to be, considering the misery you have occasioned," was the reply.

"You will let me remain, then? I have lived here all my life, and hope to die here; my mother was housekeeper before me."

"That has nothing to do with it," said Lady Alicia, coldly.

"I am engaged by the year, my lady."

"The steward will settle that."

"It will kill me to leave."

"You should have thought of that before."

"Have some pity on my age."

"No."

"*I won't go!*" exclaimed Mrs. Squires, suddenly changing her tone of entreaty for one of firmness. "I am Sir Barnard Gaston's servant, and not your ladyship's; you have no power to discharge me without your husband's authority."

So great was the astonishment of her mistress, that she could only ejaculate the word "insolent," and point to her to leave the room.

"You had better see your husband," said the housekeeper, coolly, "before you drive me to extremities. I warn you that it will not be prudent."

"Quit the house instantly," cried the mistress of Moultree, too thoroughly enraged to pay attention to her words, "or I will ring for my servants, to thrust you forth."

"You will, will you?"

"Instantly."

The woman walked deliberately towards the chimney-piece and rang the bell, and then seated herself quietly in a chair.

"If I do go," she observed, with provoking calmness, "you shall not long remain behind me."

"Are you mad—what mean you?"

"I mean," said the housekeeper, in a tone of cool defiance, "that you are no more Lady Gaston than I am, and I can prove my words. Neither is my master Sir Barnard—I can prove that and perhaps something worse; and now turn me out if you dare. I have put up with your airs and temper too long—an impostor—not a bit better than myself, and, may be, not half so good."

The astonishment and indignation of Lady Alicia were too great for words; a third feeling quickly mingled with them—doubt.

"Is it possible," she asked herself, "this wretched creature has spoken the truth?"

"Ask your husband," said Mrs. Squires, who read what was passing in her mind.

The servant who answered the bell very naturally looked surprised at seeing the housekeeper seated in the presence of his mistress.

"Did you ring, my lady?"

There was a pause—no reply.

The man repeated the question.

"It was I who rang," replied Mrs. Squires; "her ladyship has some order to give. You had better call all the household up to hear it," she added, significantly. "For my own part, I should prefer it."

"Stay! no, no!" exclaimed her bewildered mistress, hastily. "I have changed my mind. You need not wait."

"Perhaps you may change it again, my lady," observed Mrs. Squires, sarcastically.

"No, I tell you. No."

"Well, then, John, you need not wait."

Never had the high-born Lady Alicia felt so crushed and subdued. There was something in the manner of the housekeeper that forbade her doubting her assertion, and she felt all she had sinned for was escaping her.

"You have made a strange assertion," she observed, as soon as they were left alone.

"It was your own fault, my lady," replied the housekeeper, relapsing into her usually respectful tone. "You drove me to it. I was not going to be driven from the house, where I have as much right to stay as—as——"

"As I have," said her ladyship, finishing her sentence for her.

"Exactly, my lady."

"I must see my husband. If there is any truth in your statement, it is only right that your silence should be paid for."

"I do not require to be paid for it," replied Mrs. Squires. "If I have kept my secret all these years, I can keep it still, without a bribe; all I want is to remain here.'

"That, of course, you will do. The carriage has been ordered, I believe. Be kind enough, as you pass through the hall, to ascertain if it is waiting."

Never, during the number of years she had been in the family, had Lady Alicia spoken so condescendingly to her. The old domestic noticed the change, perfectly understood the motive, and smiled to herself as she quitted the library.

"What more have I to learn?" murmured the mistress of Moultree. "In my earlier days I remember to have read that a house divided against itself cannot stand. I can't remember where I read it, although I feel the truth of it. Barnard and I have been divided in heart and mind for years. Fatal disunion! Had he trusted me, it might have been different. I must dismiss such thoughts now. It is no time for regret, but action! What can this woman mean? Barnard had an elder brother, who died young—drowned, as I have always heard—drowned!

"I am lost in a maze of conjecture!—helpless as one fighting against shadows. I know not when or where the blow may come. Life is a weary thing," she continued in a tone of helplessness. "We strive and toil—use heart and brain till both are callous—to accomplish some dear hope or long-cherished purpose; attain the end, grasp it, and find it ashes."

How many—after a course of sin and disappointment—in the calm hour of reflection, arrive at the same sad conclusion!

Happy are those to whom it brings repentance.

An hour later the miserable woman drove to Brook House—her mind teeming with projects; restless, active as ever. The object of her visit—permission to see Sir Barnard—was not obtained without some difficulty. Squire Beachum felt, as he signed the order, that he yielded rather to the feelings of his heart than the dictates of his head.

Had the lawyer been present, he would most decidedly have objected to it—unfortunately, he was not, for, by the time her ladyship drove into Wicksal, Collin Craw had reached the prison where Humphrey Skillet awaited his arrival in great mental agony. Like all men capable of cruel actions, he was a coward at heart.

Never were pride and insolence more completely humbled.

"How kind! how good!" he exclaimed, the instant the former victim of his brutality entered the cell. "Heaven will recompense you for your condescension! I always said you would rise in the world. I could perceive your talent; I could, indeed, sir."

The prosperous lawyer turned his face aside, to conceal the expression of disgust at the abject flattery of the wretch.

"You don't speak to me, Mr. Craw," added the prisoner, in a piteous tone. "Surely you have not forgotten me?"

He might well ask the question. Had he seen his own visage in the glass, the unhappy man would scarcely have recognized it, so complete was the change a few hours had wrought. His visage, always lean and sallow, resembled a death's head rather than that of a living being; the bloodshot eyes appeared sunk in their sockets, and his thin, parched lips were drawn nervously apart, showing the teeth

"Forgotten you!" repeated his visitor. "There is little fear, Humphrey Skillet, that I shall ever forget you. Your name is associated with the most painful period of my existence.

"I have repented of it," groaned the unhappy wretch. "Believe me, I have repented of my cruelty towards you long since."

"For your own sake, I am glad to hear it," observed Collin, significantly.

"Besides," added the master, "it was not all my fault."

"No; others shared the manly sport with you. If I recollect rightly, there was Bolt, the porter, the ward beadle, and though last, not least, your colleague, Mrs. Penguin. I led a fine life between you. But enough of this; I did not come to the prison to reproach you with the past, or talk over old times.

"Why did you send for me?"

"Save me!" exclaimed Humphrey, suddenly throwing himself upon his knees; "save me! there is no direct evidence against me; no one saw me fire the pistol—it might have gone off by accident."

"You forget the cripple," replied the lawyer, gravely, "and—even grant that a jury could be brought to take a favorable view of the circumstances attending the poor boy's death—the confession he overheard of the murder of Bella."

"I have money—plenty of money," whispered Humphrey. "Will you undertake my defence? I have faith in you."

"Impossible."

"Name any fee you please."

"It cannot be—my services are retained on the other side. I am actively occupied in getting up evidence for the prosecution; and even were it otherwise," added Collin, "I should still decline; my impression of your guilt is not to be shaken."

"What does that signify, provided you are paid?" demanded the prisoner.

"Everything to me."

"Think again, for mercy's sake, think again. Take all I have."

"Money will not bribe me," replied the lawyer.

"I can offer something better than money, perhaps," said Humphrey Skillet, wiping the thick drops of perspiration from his pallid brow. "Have you never felt a desire to discover some clue to those who abandoned you?"

It was now Collin's turn to feel agitated. He had always understood that his parents had left him, when an infant, at the work-house door; and, deeply as the idea had pained him, a still more terrible one suggested itself, and he trembled lest the wretched criminal might prove his father.

"Can you name them?" he demanded, greatly agitated.

"I can give you the clue to find them," replied the prisoner, "and, with your sharp wits, the task would not be very difficult. Will you consent to defend me?"

"No," replied his visitor, firmly, "for my heart tells me that you are guilty; and I scorn to purchase the information you allude to by tampering with my conscience; and, after all, it would be useless," he added, solemnly; "the evidence against you is unbroken—not a link in the chain is wanting. The poor crippled victim of your cruelty——"

"Curse him!" said Humphrey, gnashing his teeth with rage. "Curse him!—but it serves me right for sparing him—I won't die!—I dare not die!—I am not fit for death! Health beats in every vein; my limbs are strong and active; it will be as much a murder to take my life as——"

"You are unwise," interrupted Collin Craw, "to speak thus in my presence."

"You are my friend," shrieked the wretch, "you must be my friend—and all I have shall be yours. You can easily buy off the evidence of Zach. It is he, and he alone, that can hang me. You will consent, I am sure you will!"

"Impossible!"

"Not if I held out the prospect, nay, the certainty, of enabling you to discover your family and relations?"

"They can have but little love for the child they so long abandoned to the tender mercies of the parish," observed his hearer; "not that I would harshly blame them. Doubtless they are poor, and poverty is a sad temptation."

"The worst!" groaned the prisoner; "the worst! But yours are not poor."

"It matters but little what they are, since I shall never know them."

"On the contrary," urged the criminal, "they are rich, and, I have every reason to believe, noble."

Collin smiled incredulously.

"I can prove it," continued Humphrey Skillet, eagerly; "I am the only living witness that can do so. Will you see me perish?—lose, like a drivelling idiot, the chance—more, the certainty—of a fortune and a name?"

"Of both," replied the lawyer, "rather than purchase them at the price you ask. Why seek my assistance? There are other members of the profession equally skilled, and far more experienced. Why not apply to them?"

"No! no!—you. I have faith in none but you!"

It had become a fixed idea with the assassin, since he heard how his former drudge had risen in the world and distinguished himself, that he alone could save him; and he clung to it as the drowning man catches at the frail reed that floats upon the stream beside him.

"Say that you will," he added, imploringly. "Let me hear your voice—forget the past—I can atone all that—and speak to me as a friend."

"Humphrey Skillet," answered the lawyer, solemnly, "although but little kindness ever passed between us, I will speak to you as a friend—a true and sincere one."

"At last," murmured his old tormentor, overcome by his emotion; "at last. I knew he could not see me hung like a dog. I knew it."

"Turn your thoughts," said Collin, "to the only source of mercy left to you—towards Heaven; man's forbearance is exhausted, and Providence, so long braved, has raised her arm to strike. So complete," he added, "do I consider the evidence against you, that it is not in the power of human ingenuity to avert the blow. I look upon your condemnation as certain."

On hearing this opinion so solemnly and deliberately expressed, the assassin of the hapless Bella and Hugh fell upon the floor of his cell, writhing and shrieking in an agony of terror.

His visitor opened the door and beckoned to the jailer to enter.

"A bad case, I'm afeared," observed the man. "It do look ugly when a prisoner takes on so after seeing his lawyer."

"I am not his lawyer," replied the gentleman. "Let me pass forth quickly. I long to breathe the fresh air of heaven."

It would be against nature to suppose that the assertions of the master of Wicksal poor house had not excited the feelings of Collin, or that he could content himself by pronouncing them as the idle ravings of a despairing man. If he did not exactly believe them, something whispered to him they were worth sifting; and he mused long and anxiously upon the subject as he retraced his steps from the prison towards Brook House.

"There must be something in it," he muttered. "Ready as Humphrey is, he could not have invented such a lie."

Collin thrust his hand into his pockets—a habit he had when anything perplexed him—and finding a piece of crumpled paper in one of them, drew it forth.

It was the note from Mrs. Penguin.

"Eureka!" he exclaimed. "I have discovered the clue at last;" and quickening his pace, he directed his way towards the workhouse.

[TO BE CONTINUED IN OUR NEXT.]

LEAVE TO DINE.—Every day, at about one P. M., the notes of a discordant horn resound through every town and village in the Siamese territories, meant to proclaim to the world at large, "that His Majesty the King of Siam had had his dinner, and was graciously pleased to grant permission to all other potentates on the face of the earth to follow his judicious example." A Siamese would no more believe that any other crowned head dared transgress this law with impunity, than he would in the existence of an electric telegraph: and as for breaking through it themselves, instantaneous death would be the result.

"WHAT THEY SAY."

BY MRS. L. H. SIGOURNEY.

Wouldst thou know what troubles many,
What annoys them night and day?
Not a frightful myth, or robber,
But the spectre, "*What they say.*"

"*What they say!*" It haunts the maiden
When her hat or dress she buys,
Goads the matron, till she maketh
Husband's purse a sacrifice.

To the orator it clingeth,
Daunts the statesman in his dream,
With the pulpit-teacher stealeth
'Tween him and his highest theme.

"*What they say?*" Well, let them say it,
Airy echo, fleet as dew,
When they've breathed it, 'tis forgotten,
They who hear, forget it too.

Wouldst thou know what rules the million?
Themis, with her ancient sway?
Pomp and tramp of banner'd legions?
No,—the bubble, "*What they say.*"

Hartford, Conn., Dec. 20th, 1860.

AN
ADVENTURE WITH WOLVES.

BY EMERSON BENNETT.

"A sleigh-ride across the prairie, with a beloved companion beside you; two bounding steeds, with their musical bells, before you; the pure, white snow, glistening with star-like gems, beneath you; and the silvery moon, sailing through the clear, blue heavens above; oh! is it not glorious?" enthusiastically exclaimed a friend of mine, as we sat conversing one evening before a cheerful winter fire.

"In speaking of the prairie," he continued, "I do not of course mean those great boundless wastes beyond the limits of civilization; but one of those broad, beautiful plains, or meadows, which we have in some of our western States; where the tall, green grass and bright flowers wave like a field of grain to the soft breeze of summer, and the crisp snow lies deep and sparkling beneath the keen, biting airs of winter.

"Ah!" he pursued, with a long-drawn sigh and a solemn shake of his head; "there was one prairie ride which I shall never forget; and I never think of it but I feel my flesh creep, and a cold, almost icy, shudder run through my frame. It was my last ride with poor, gentle Nellie Danforth, who now sleeps peacefully beneath the green turf of her prairie home."

He paused a few moments, with the air and expression of one recalling a sad and painful event, and then resumed and told the following thrilling story:

"I loved Nellie Danforth when she was in the bloom of girlhood; I loved her till the cold grave closed over her, and I love her memory still, more than anything else that remains to me on earth. We were never engaged, for she was early marked as the victim of a fatal disease; and she always talked to me as one who knew her abiding place was not here, and bade me prepare to meet her in that world beyond, where there is no more parting, no more sorrow. Poor, sweet, sinless Nellie!

"The cold, clear, bracing air of the winter before her death seemed to give her new life and vigor; and a few of her fond friends, who could not bear the thought of her being taken so untimely from among us, began to indulge the vain hope that she would ultimately recover. She even seemed to be more hopeful herself; and one day she expressed a wish to visit a friend who resided across the prairie from her own home, at a distance of some twelve or fifteen miles. Her slightest wish was my strongest law; and the next day, behind two of the fleetest steeds, we sped across the frozen, creaking snow, to the cheering music of the jingling bells.

"It was ten o'clock of a clear, cold, beautiful night, that, against the persuasion of her friends, we left them upon our return. Nellie was in good spirits; and as I drew the warm robes around her, bade our friends adieu, and gave the rein to our fiery steeds, which arched their proud necks and bounded away like the wind, I experienced a wild feeling of exultation and happiness, to which I had long been a stranger.

"Away and away we flew over the crisp and shining snow—the keen, rushing air cutting our almost muffled faces, and the silvery, flying particles causing us to half close and sometimes cover our eyes. On! on! for a half hour and six good miles, over a level prairie, with only here and there a little cluster of trees standing like sentinels in the white, open level, and the bright, glowing stars twinkling so merrily in the clear, blue, high-arching dome of heaven!

"'O, how delightful!' said my sweet companion, as she seemed to press more fondly to my side.

"'If it could be ever thus, dear Nellie,' I replied, in a low, tender tone; 'if I could only dare to hope that your returning health could give me many future scenes like this—oh! what inexpressible happiness would be mine, now and forever!'

"'Ah, my true and noble friend!' she murmured, 'if God would only spare me for your dear sake! You deserve to be happy, my more than brother!'

"'But never can be, if my own dear Nellie is taken from me.'

"'Oh, say not that, dear Harry!—the world is full of beings better far than I. I may not live; and it would make sad my dying hours to know I left you hopeless and disconsolate.'

"'Oh, Nellie dearest, you must not die!' impulsively burst from my anguished heart. 'I will pray God, as I have ever prayed, so fervently to spare you! and surely, surely, He will grant my prayer!'

"My sweet companion did not answer; but I fancied she pressed still more closely against me, as a long, deep sigh came up from her gentle bosom.

"A solemn, thoughtful silence followed; and then we both were startled by a distant baying howl, that came floating over the snowy plain, and mingled so strangely with the musical monotony of the jingling bells. Instantly our horses checked their speed, threw back their ears, champed their bits, and gave vent to a loud snort of alarm and terror. Another and another, and still another, of those fearful sounds came floating over the white and glistening plain.

"'Merciful God!' exclaimed my now terrified companion; 'have I been spared for this!'

"'Fear not!' I said, as I laid the whip upon the mettled beasts and sent them flying like the startled deer; 'we shall escape!'

"I spoke in a tone of confidence, but my heart seemed to stand still, and I doubt not my very lips were white.

"For how could we escape a ravenous pack of wolves, which were already upon our scent, and coming from away to the right, so that we had not even the hope which a dead chase might have given us? Singly this animal, one of the most cowardly of the canine genus, will not attack a human being; but when banded together in large droves or packs, and nearly famished, as they generally are in the winter, they become very formidable and dangerous; and as this was the season when they were most to be feared, and as I was without other weapon than a loaded whip, I felt that if we could not outrun them, our chance of ever seeing our friends and home again was so very small as to be almost hopeless. And that we could not outrun them, I became more and more convinced every minute; for though I had put our horses to a dangerous speed, and we were flying along with a swiftness to equal the rushing car, I heard them nearer and nearer, and knew that they would soon be upon us.

"My fair companion had become silent from excess of emotion; but I could feel her delicate form quiver in every nerve, as she leaned heavily against me, and I trembled to think what the effect would be upon her feeble system, even supposing we should miraculously escape with life.

"'Courage, dearest Nellie!' I said, in a tone that belied my own quaking heart; 'a few minutes more, at the rate we are going, will put us beyond danger.'

"As if in mockery of my words, there came, even as I spoke, a series of the most ferocious snapping, gnashing, barking howls; and looking behind me, a little to the right, I could see a long, black, moving line advancing upon us, and knew that soon the worst would be realized in all its maddening horrors.

"'Dear Nellie,' I said, quietly, but with an internal anguish which no language could portray, 'I think it would be better for you to lie down in the bottom of the sleigh, and let me wrap these robes closely around you—for while I am defending myself against the attack of these beasts, as I trust I may successfully, you might possibly get injured.'

"'Oh, Harry!' she exclaimed, as she impulsively threw her arms around my neck and pressed her lips to mine—such a kiss as the dying loved one might give to the living mourner—'may God be merciful to you! and if we do not meet again on earth, I shall look for you to join me in the abode of the blest.'

"She said no more, but dropped quietly down as I directed; and in another moment I had so disposed the robes about her fragile form that not a fang of the furious beasts could reach her while I should remain with life to fight above her.

"By this time the wolves, a great many in number, were close upon us; and as I looked fearfully around me, I could see them to the right and left, as well as behind us, their eyes gleaming like balls of fire, and their ferocious, snapping growls making my flesh creep with horror. Our horses meantime had done their best; and now with their ears laid back, and snorting with terror, they were still doing their utmost, and taking us forward with frightful and dangerous speed.

"Suddenly one of the foremost wolves, which had gained the side of the near horse, bounded in with a fierce yell, and snapped him on the flank; and with an appalling cry of terror rather than pain, the animal reared, plunged and leaped aside, upsetting the sleigh and sending my companion and self, far out upon the frozen snow. Though half-stunned, and considerably bruised, I did not, for an instant, lose my presence of mind, but sprung to my feet just in time to deal a few heavy blows with the butt of my loaded whip upon the heads of the two or three furious beasts which had at once assailed me, expecting to find me an easy prey. As they fell back before me, and then suddenly flew to join the main attack upon our horses—which were already groaning and shrieking their last beneath a fatal assault of their gnashing, tearing, and famished foes—I reached the side of my dear companion, and found her completely enveloped in the buffalo robe, and lying as quiet and silent as if dead.

"'Dearest Nellie, are you still living?' cried I, as I passionately flung myself down by her side.

"'Yes!' came a faint muffled voice; 'air! air!'

"I tore the robe from her as quick as possible, and found her almost smothered. The cold, fresh air revived her almost instantly.

"'Are you injured, Nellie dear?'

"'No! and you, darling?'

"'Safe and unharmed as yet.'

"'Oh, God! those horrible wolves!'

"They are now devouring our horses, and possibly we may escape!' cried I, as I glanced quickly around, and fixed my eyes upon a cluster of trees which grew along the margin of a slough at no great distance. Quick, quick, Nellie dear! to your feet and let us fly!'

"I passed my arm about her waist as I spoke, lifted her to her feet, and half bore her forward, with a fervent prayer for deliverance, toward the only spot which seemed to promise a hope. We had gone over about one-half the distance, when two or three sharp growls close behind us, caused my companion to shrink into my arms with a startled cry. Instantly I turned and thrust her behind me, and found myself face to face with three or four wolves, which slunk back a few paces with savage but cowardly growls. My whip, my only weapon, was still in my hand; and seeing I could reach them with the lash, I swung it like lightning through the air, and brought it down with several rapid cuts right and left; and the next moment our enemies were flying, with howls of fear and pain, back to their comrades which, snarling and fighting, were busy glutting themselves upon the dead carcasses of our noble horses.

"Again we fled for our lives—or rather I fled, bearing poor Nellie in my arms—for the intense excitement of the last few moments had so overpowered her as to render her almost helpless as an infant. With a grateful prayer in my heart, we reached, without further molestation, an oak tree, with low, heavy limbs and intermingling branches, and I exclaimed, in a hurried tone:

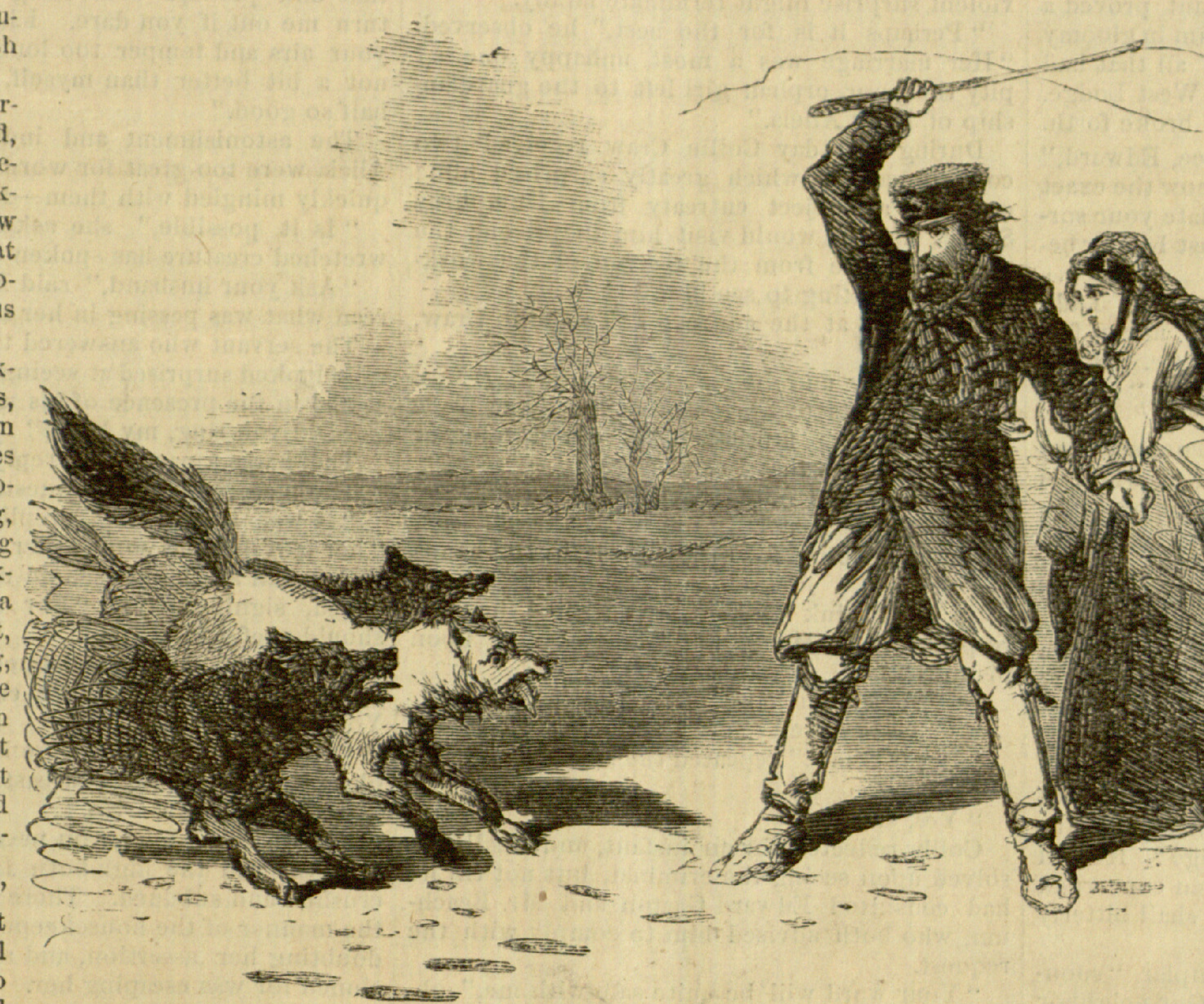
"'Now, my darling Nellie, one more effort for your life and we are saved. In Heaven's name, use all your strength, and climb quickly into this tree, beyond the reach of our foes!'

"'I will do my best,' she said faintly.

"I lifted her almost upon the first limb, and in a moment was by her side; and from thence we quickly forced our way up, until entirely beyond the reach of danger; and then I found myself almost as weak as my companion, from an excess of grateful emotions.

"We remained there for more than an hour, listening to the horrid crew at work upon our poor horses, and scarcely once thinking of the cold, which was most intense. Gradually the snarling, fighting pack grew quiet as they became gorged; and then one after another they slunk away to their lairs, and a solemn stillness once more reigned over the late noisy scene.

"I now told my companion that we must remain all night where we were and run the risk of freezing to death, or set off on foot over the snow for her own dwelling, which was between two and three miles distant. After duly weighing the matter, she chose the latter alternative, and an hour later she was fainting in her mother's arms.



"Alas! the frail system of poor Nellie Danforth never fully recovered from the effects of that night of terror. As the winter wore on, she began to decline rapidly, and the piercing winds of March sung a requiem over her grave, and I was thus left to mourn the loss of the only being I ever truly loved."

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Guy.—There is no description of black ink which will not freeze in the latitude of Maine. Alcohol is not used in the manufacture of ink. To make twelve gallons of the best black ink, take twelve pounds of nut-galls, five pounds of green sulphate of iron, five pounds of gum senegal, and twelve gallons of water. Into a copper vessel put nine gallons of the water and the nut-galls bruised; boil three hours, adding gradually the rest of the water to replace that which is lost by evaporation. Empty the decoction into a wooden tub, let it cool and settle; drain off the clear liquor from the lees. The gum senegal, dissolved in a little hot water, is then to be added, also, the green sulphate of iron, dissolved in water. Let the whole stand exposed to the air for a few hours, and then bottle. This ink is about twice as rich as that usually sold, and will bear a third more water, if a cheaper ink is desired. A better ink than that made in the manner described has never been invented, but it is expensive on account of the high price of nut-galls.

T. T.—This correspondent wishes to assist in the solution of the question as to which of the expressions is the correct one—2 times 2 *is* 4, or 2 times 2 *are* 4. He advocates the first form, and maintains that the verb should be *is*, and not *are*, and says: "I regard the expression '2 times 2' as a single idea, and the *real* subject of the verb *is* which follows it, because nothing else can be the subject thereof; consequently, *is* is correct. The evidence of the truth of this theory is cumulative; for, in analyzing the elliptical expression '2 times 2,' we find it to read thus: 2 taken 2 times, that is, the single, abstract number 2, taken 2 times, *makes* or *amounts* to 4. How would it sound, in an analogous case, to say algebraically, 'a times x *are* ax?' I think, Mr. Editor, that the advocates of the phrase '2 times 2 *are* 4,' will have to yield the argument. If not, I should like to know what can be advanced from their side to overthrow the position I have here taken."

Paterfamilias.—That gas is the cheapest of all lights has been proved by experiment. A writer in the Encyclopedia Britannica gives the result of his experiments in the various means of illumination, from which we learn that the quantity of light given by one dollar's worth of wax candles can be produced by twenty-five cents' worth of tallow candles, by five cents' worth of whale oil, and by three cents' worth of coal gas. Another chemist who has written on the subject states the relative cost thus: Wax, one hundred; tallow, twenty-eight and six-tenths; oil, fourteen and three-tenths; gas, four and seventy-six hundredths. If, therefore, you find your gas bill higher than your oil bill used to be, the cause is not the greater expensiveness of gas. Gas is the most easily wasted of all the means of lighting, nor can it be said of all gas-meters that "the apparatus cannot lie."

Hope.—Concerning the origin of the saying that nine tailors make a man, this correspondent gives the following new version: "Nine young tailors were walking together, when they were accosted by a beggar, who asked them for alms. They all gave him some money; whereupon the beggar exclaimed, 'Young men, you have made a man of me;' and hence arose the saying that nine tailors make a man." This might pass, in the absence of a better conjecture, if our correspondent had not added that the circumstance actually occurred in a place near which he used to live, and that he knew some of the parties. If so, it must have been a very long time ago, for the saying has been current in the world for three centuries, at least. The late Ralph Farnum, last survivor of the Battle of Bunker Hill, who died at the age of 105, would have been only an infant in years compared with him.

S. S.—This correspondent informs us that the explanation usually given by "old salts" to greenhorns of the phenomenon of the "filling of the corked bottle," &c., when it is sunk to a great depth in the sea, is this, namely: that one of old Neptune's mischievous grandchildren draws the cork, fills the bottle with water, and then corks it up again, just to play a trick upon those tars who are not sharp enough to understand the game.

Medicus.—Whether or not it is "well to eat just before going to bed," is a point that each person must decide for himself. No general rule can be made that will apply to all cases. Some people sleep best after eating; with others, eating at a late hour prevents sleep, and occasions dyspepsia. Physicians generally consider the practice unhealthy.

Four Boys.—Gutta Percha is the gum of a tree that grows abundantly in Borneo and the other islands of the Indian Archipelago. The tree is sixty or seventy feet high, and two or three feet thick. The gum is obtained by making incisions in the trunk, from which it flows as a liquid, but soon hardens upon being exposed to the air.

Kate says that she has the authority of a learned and eminent doctor of divinity for stating that the word *selah* is not, as it is generally supposed to be, a term relating to the music or elocution in chanting or reading the Psalm, but that it is an expression used by the Psalmist, meaning "pause here and reflect."

Traveller.—A six-months' tour in Europe, if you travel in the ordinary way, will cost you about a thousand dollars. The expenses of a traveller, the world over, will average about six dollars a day. But you can see Europe for three dollars a day, if you know enough about the ways of the world.

George.—All young ladies are not attracted toward gentlemen by the same means or traits of character. Young ladies of sense are attracted by good sense and good manners, before good looks or a full purse. Foolish girls look for the latter recommendations before anything else.

Eighteen.—It is not well for a young man to attend a gymnasium if he is of delicate constitution, unless under the advice of some experienced person, who would regulate the exercise according to his strength.

Susan.—We should not think it best for a young lady, with no ear for music, to spend years in practising it; though even that, as a discipline for the mind, would be better than vapid idleness.

Rectus.—You say you have a young lady friend whose parents do not allow her to go where there is dancing, although they do not object to her participating in other amusements; that *you*, on the contrary, are very fond of dancing, and ask if it would be right for you to go to a ball occasionally and wait upon some other lady, if you should inform the first mentioned lady of it *before going*. We infer, from what you say, that you are engaged to the young lady of whom you speak; if so, we do not think it argues well for your affection to prefer dancing *out* of her society to the pleasure of her company. If you are *not* engaged, of course you are free to follow every fickle impulse of a man's desire, as far as the lady is concerned.

Quaker City.—This correspondent says: "I love a young lady, but can never get a chance to offer myself, as some person is always present, and when I walk with her in the street, it seems not the place to declare myself." Why not *write* to her then? though many husbands have not objected to asking for their wives, on the way to or from home, while walking. We see no objection to the latter course.

Grandpapa.—We do not think it is a good practice for young children to read or study after candle light. The brain at that hour should never be stimulated, unless we wish prematurely to destroy it. Such a practice is also apt to prove injurious to the eyesight.

Y. Y.—"I neither smoke, chew, nor use strong drink," says Y. Y., "and yet I am troubled with a bad breath. What am I to do?" Such a state of things often arises from a disordered stomach; consult some physician about it.

W. J. wants to know if a lady who loves a gentleman is as free to joke with him in company as she is with any other gentleman. No reason occurs to us why she should not be thus free. However, if love has not been avowed between the parties, she would not be likely to do so. In the latter case, ladies are generally more reserved toward the beloved person than toward any other.

J. A. B., Baltimore.—We are obliged to you for your appreciation of the Ledger, and your high opinion of our capacity to "give the people of this country vital and needed advice on all questions affecting their interests." We must say, however, in regard to your suggestion that we should "describe those dangerous symptoms preceding those fatal maladies which deprive so many of health and life, and give the public practical advice, cautions, and directions when to apply to doctors and when to let them alone," that you have greatly overrated our powers. In fact, there is no man living, nor is there any body, school, or society of men, that could practically carry out your idea. Every human being has to be treated specifically and specially for disease, and must have personal interviews with his physician. No general rule as to the point of time, or stage of illness, at which the patient should first consult a doctor, can safely be laid down. His only safety is in consulting a competent medical adviser, as soon as he receives warning from his system that something is going wrong. An impressive instance of the fatality of doing otherwise occurred in this city a few years ago: A wealthy gentleman was, as he said, "somewhat indisposed," for several days, but finally announced, at breakfast one morning, that he felt all right, and would go down to his office after a while. About the middle of the forenoon an eminent physician made a social call upon the family, and hearing that the gentleman, who was an old friend of his, was "rather out of sorts," he went into the library to see him. After talking with him ten minutes or so, during which time the gentleman was preparing to go down town to his office, the doctor stepped back into the drawing-room and told the lady of the house to send *instantly* for her husband's lawyer. The lady obeyed. He also told her to send at once for certain old friends, a clergyman among the number. It was done; and then, in response to her alarmed inquiries, the physician informed her that her husband would die before sundown. We will not attempt to describe the scene which followed. Suffice it to say, that with the assistance of the lawyer and friends the doomed man was barely able to set his affairs in order, before death set his seal upon him. And it did not lessen the grief of his wife and children to learn, that had a competent physician been called forty-eight hours before, the husband and father might have been saved from this sudden and overwhelming doom. When we are not by any means safe under the utmost that medical science and skillful practitioners can do for us, it is inexcusable folly to trust the issues of life and death to empirical rules and generalizations.

Collector.—A doit is an ancient Scottish coin, equal in value to a twenty-fourth part of a cent. The specimens now found in collections were all coined during the reigns of Charles I. and II. As we have never been able to get a sight of one of these minute particles of filthy lucre, we cannot describe it to you. The Dutch formerly had a coin called a doit, the value of which we know not. A groat was a silver coin, worth four pence English, still represented in the modern fourpenny piece. The ancient groat, however, was as large nearly as a quarter of a dollar. A groat of Shakspeare's time would bring a very large sum in these days of rabid collectors. Specimens of the shell money, and also of the round, bullet-like silver coin of the East Indies, can often be obtained from sailors at a moderate price. If we ever take the collecting mania, we shall board a ship fresh from Calcutta, and see what we can pick up among the crew. Some of the most curious things we ever saw, in the way of money, have been obtained in that manner.

Walnut Street.—William Penn was not enriched by the grant of Pennsylvania. On the contrary, it nearly ruined him, and he was painfully embarrassed in his circumstances during the latter years of his life. On one occasion he was prevented from sailing from London to his province by mere want of money to pay his passage. All the pecuniary advantage of his grant was enjoyed by his two sons, who inherited from their father his property, but not his virtues. The estate inherited by William Penn from his father was not nearly as great as is generally supposed. His last biographer says it yielded a revenue of not more than fifteen hundred pounds a year—a considerable income for that day, but not the "princely fortune" you have been led to think he possessed.

Widow.—You had better go to the poorhouse, and live there all the rest of your life, than marry a man for the sake of being supported by him. Only one thing can ever justify marriage, or make it other than a misery, and that is LOVE based upon respect and confidence. The lot of a poor widow, we admit, is a hard and cheerless one, and the temptation to change it for the one you mention must sometimes be strong. Yet we are confident that no calamity, no combination of calamities, no degree of poverty or loneliness, can produce such a sum of misery as a marriage unsanctioned by affection. Be his housekeeper, if you will, but his wife, never, till you love and trust him.

Quantum.—As a general rule, no man can gain money by lecturing, who has not acquired a great reputation in some other profession. The difficulty is not to write a good lecture, but to get people to come and hear it. It is the curiosity we all have to see a celebrated man, that induces so many persons to crowd the lecture-room when such an individual is announced to speak. As your name is utterly unknown to the public, we fear you would find it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to draw a paying audience.

Foreigner.—There is no school in or near New York in which the theory and practice of the mechanic arts are taught together. Our boys have to learn the practice of the mechanic arts in the workshop, and the theory at home. The workshop is the best of all schools, provided the apprentice has spirit and resolution enough to devote an hour or two every evening to the acquisition of the science relating to his trade.

L. M. N.—Dentistry is probably as old as man. Herodotus mentions that, in his day, there were "tooth-doctors" in Egypt, and in Rome there were men who pulled teeth. Until within the last hundred years, however, the whole art of dentistry appears to have consisted in the extraction of teeth, an operation usually performed by barbers.

Query.—No length of residence in a foreign country, and no just compliance with the laws of that foreign country, can deprive you of your American citizenship.

S. R. S., Harroddsburg, Ky.—This correspondent says: I have been considerably interested with communications that have appeared in your correspondents' column, and feel constrained to give utterance to my private convictions on one of the subjects discussed. I speak in reference to the sound question. I may not be "sound" on it myself, but of that you may judge directly. It is true that we have no absolute proof that sound is produced outside of, and apart from, the ear; but reasoning from analogy, the evidence that such is the case is, I think, conclusive. In the nose, for instance, we have the olfactory nerve spread out over the lining membrane, and ready to receive the odor imparted to it from external objects, but would we say that smell is caused, not by the existence in external objects of odor, but merely by some contact of the object with, or proximity to, the nervous apparatus, which it perceiving, gives rise to that peculiar sensation which we term smell? No; the odor is in the external object, and is not that sensation which arises from a communication of some kind being established between it and the extended surface of the first pair of nerves within the nasal cavity. So it is with sound. The auditory apparatus is ready and prepared to receive the sound as conveyed by the air. The tympanum, the semi-circular canals, the cochlea, and the four small bones of the middle ear, are all there, and nothing is needed but the communication of the sound to them, and from them to the brain by means of the auditory nerve. A sound is produced externally—the air acts as a medium—the ear receives it—the mind comprehends it by means of the auditory nerve. It seems to me impossible that all the various intonations of the human voice—the changeable harmonies of birds—the wonderful modulations of musical instruments, and other complicated sounds, should be produced alone by the vibrations of the air on the auditory apparatus. Let us look for a moment at a subject that pertains to Mental Philosophy. I am perfectly aware that philosophers have held opposite positions on the subject, but I believe it is now pretty generally conceded that beauty is a property that resides in the external object, but not in the mind, *i. e.*, is *objective* and not *subjective*. If, for instance, we behold the clear sky and regard it as beautiful, and the occasion should return when we may behold it again, and we should again be impressed with a sense of its beauty, then we necessarily conclude that the cause exists *per se* and not merely in relation to us. Otherwise we could never believe the absolute existence of anything, but should, with Berkely and Hume, call in question the existence of matter itself, save as phenominal and relative to our senses. So sound exists separate from and independent of our ears. Were every man in the whole world deaf, sound would still exist—though owing to defect in his auditory apparatus, man would not perceive its existence. As well might a deaf individual contend that a sound did not arise from the blowing of a trumpet, or the ringing of a bell in proximity to him, because *he* did not hear it, when a number of persons near him were positively aware of the fact that a sound did actually arise. Suppose, again, a person had thrown a stone through a window, yet owing to his distance from it he did not hear the sound of crashing glass. Is it possible that the stone caused no sound in its passage through the window? Or shall we adopt the more easy solution, that a sound *was produced*, but failed to reach the ear?

Inquirer.—Here is a tempest in a teapot. Inquirer informs us, and through us desires to inform the universe, that the peace of the "fashionable boarding house" at which he resides has been broken by the conduct of the ladies who live in it. These ladies, it appears, were dissatisfied with their seats at the table, and one day, before a gentleman had entered the dining room, they came in a body and took the gentlemen's seats. When the gentlemen entered, the ladies sat calm and resolute, offering neither explanation nor apology, but giving the ejected males plainly to understand that the seats which had known them would know them no more forever. Could this be borne? Never! The next day the gentlemen came home to dinner a few minutes earlier than usual, marched boldly into the dining room, and took their old seats. The ladies looked carving-knives, but used none. One of the gentlemen pleasantly remarked that if the ladies preferred the seats in question, they were very much at their service, upon which all the gentlemen offered to rise. But no; the ladies took deadly offence at their audacity, and refused to take the seats as a gift which they were willing to seize as a prize. Discord reigns in the house. Conversation is out of the question. Everything is in extremity. Our advice is sought, but we hesitate at the possible consequences of interfering. We venture to suggest, however, that perhaps the gentlemen had better appoint a committee to meet a committee of the ladies, and ascertain what the lovely creatures meant by their movements; whether it was the stove that roasted them or a draught that gave them the influenza. One thing, we think, is certain, and that is, that the gentlemen will be sure to get the worst of the controversy if it be kept up until the ladies become thoroughly aroused.

R. B. S.—The history of Rome, as commonly related, is replete with falsehood. That Nero committed many atrocious crimes may be considered certain, but modern critics all concur in the opinion that he was not the unmitigated monster he was formerly represented to be. The story cited by you of Nero fiddling while Rome was burning, was questioned by Tacitus, and is in itself highly improbable. Dr. Anthon, of Columbia College, says, that upon this occasion Nero appears to have acted *with the greatest liberality and kindness*; the city was supplied with provisions at a very moderate price, and the imperial gardens were thrown open to the sufferers, and buildings were erected for their accommodation. But these acts of humanity and benevolence, adds this eminent scholar, were insufficient to screen Nero from the popular suspicion. It was generally believed that he had set fire to the city himself, and it was even reported that he had ascended the top of a high tower in order to witness the conflagration, where "he amused himself with singing the Destruction of Troy." It was to remove these suspicions that Nero accused the Christians of setting fire to the city, and put large numbers of them to death. It appears that Nero, notwithstanding his crimes, enjoyed considerable popularity during his reign, and that, for many years after his death, his tomb was occasionally decked with garlands of flowers by those who respected his memory. He seems to have endeavored to protect the people from the rapacity of governors and tax gatherers. The word "fiddling," as quoted by you, is of course a poetical exaggeration, as the violin was not invented till more than a thousand years after the death of Nero.

Oregonian.—What is the use of peppering us with these unanswerable questions? This correspondent, a boy seventeen years old, says that on board the ship that brought him from San Francisco to Oregon were three dogs; first, a Newfoundland, weighing forty-one pounds, and possessing a most amiable disposition; secondly, a small bulldog, so savage that he had to be chained up; thirdly, a minute lapdog, a four-pounder, much inclined to bark, but not to bite. By observing the remarkable differences between these animals, he was led to inquire how it could be that all the varieties of dogs could be descended from the single pair that Adam named in the Garden of Eden. Well, he may inquire. We have only space to say that Buffon and Darwin both agree in the conclusion that all dogs *did* descend from a single pair, and that the different species originated in different circumstances of climate, and other local causes. Buffon thinks that the shepherd's dog is the great original dog, because that species possesses most of the essential dog instinct—is the doggiest of dogs.

Religion.—Is there most real religion among the educated or uneducated? That is a puzzling question to answer, as it involves many other questions. We are inclined to think that the more a man theorizes and speculates about religion, the less he feels its power. It is pretty generally admitted that a poor, illiterate person may often be much nearer heaven than the greatest religious philosopher.

New York.—If you wish to accomplish any object that requires the sanction of the legislature, you should apply, first of all, to the members who represent your district. They are elected and paid for the express purpose of serving their constituents, and you need feel no delicacy about giving them a reasonable degree of trouble.

B. Y.—Why not devote a few hours, some day, to helping your boys learn to skate? Your presence and sympathy, on such an occasion, would greatly facilitate their progress, and add much to the zest of the sport, especially if you happen to measure your length on the ice a few times.

Susan.—We see no impropriety in your getting a patent for an improved kind of gravestone. Certainly, there is room for improvement, particularly in the inscriptions usually placed upon them. We hope, however, you do not intend that all our gravestones shall be of one pattern.

Union.—Yes: the Home of Washington will be restored, as nearly as possible, to its original condition, as soon as circumstances will permit. This was the original design of the Association, and it will doubtless be carried out.

Lucy.—We think young men who stand in a church porch on Sunday, to stare ladies out of countenance, should be requested to pass either in or out by the sexton whenever they are so impertinent.

****Several letters stand over to be answered in our next.*